



PLAYSTATION 3

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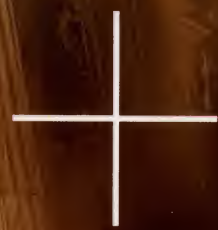
Issue 030 April 2009 £5.99
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**How
to be a
PS3 god**

Dominate *all* the
big games with
our expert guide

God Of War III

Prepare to worship



**Hands-on with
Op Flashpoint 2**
Rockstar does
the Wild West
**Hideo Kojima's
Blu-ray collection**
...and we try to
chat up Chun-Li



TERMINATOR PS3 TRAITORS



SPLIT SECOND DEAD RISING 2



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HOLD



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Welcome



It's never really bothered me that Sony doesn't have a corporate mascot in

the same way that Microsoft has Master Chief and Nintendo has Mario. Mainly because, y'know, I'm a fully grown man and my days of drawing comics in which Sonic inexplicably attacks Mario with a samurai sword have been over for years. Well, a year.

Nonetheless, if I had to pick any character to carry the PlayStation flag it would have to be Kratos. Bald, furious and naked but for a microskirt and the ashes of his murdered family, he's the kind of zero-tolerance madman we can surely all get on-board with. And as we discovered when we flew to LA to speak to everyone on the God Of War III development team bar the cleaner (who was busy) the Ghost Of Sparta's PS3 debut looks like being a stunner.

Inspired, we've also come up with tips that will turn you into a gaming god. Forget the tedious walkthroughs found in lesser magazines, this is 100% expert-sourced advice. One final bit of housekeeping: the plans for our forthcoming digital ground war continue apace. Register for updates on the next phase at officialplaystationmagazine.com.

Tim Clark
Editor-in-chief
tim.clark@futurenet.com

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Don't lose your head, but Kratos is back.

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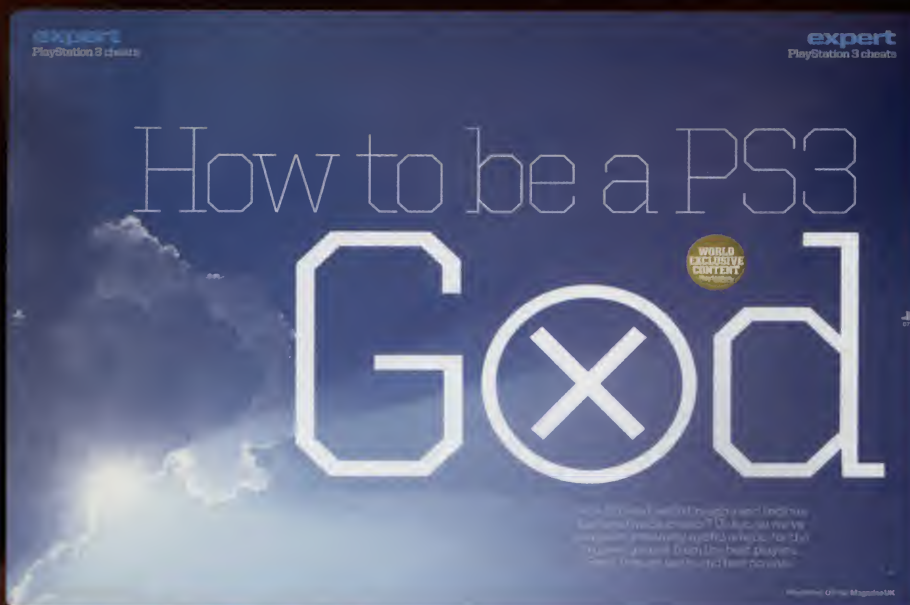
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Who we are...



Tim Clark
Editor-in-chief

Took transfer deadline day off purely to post begging letters to Arsene Wenger on his own Facebook page.

Game of the month
Call Of Duty 4
Favourite god
Zeus



Ben Wilson
Deputy editor

With Super Bowl over and baseball yet to restart, Ben spiralled into a funk that not even Madden could fix.

Game of the month
Magic Ball
Favourite god
Poseidon



Leon Hurley
Commissioning editor

When asked for favourite god said, "Can I have Kim Jong-Il?" He's highbrow!

Game of the month
Crash Commandos
Favourite god
Morgan Freeman



Rachel Penny
News editor

Stunned team with story of how "I burned myself whilst cooking steak, naked". Next month: tempura.

Game of the month
Resident Evil 5
Favourite god
Frith



Nathan Ditum
Reviews editor

Protested that his new Home column would push his workload past breaking point. It's 122 words, dude.

Game of the month
Burnout Paradise
Favourite god
Odin



Helen Woodey
Operations editor

Like planes, trains and London buses, a light dusting of snow instantly put Hells out of commission.

Game of the month
Guitar Hero World Tour
Favourite god
Hera

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SUBSCRIPTIONS

Phone our UK hotline on 0870 837 4722
Subscribe online at myfavouritemagazines.co.uk
NEXT ISSUE ON SALE 14 APRIL
Printed in the UK by William Gibbons on behalf of Future.
Distributed in the UK by Seymour Distribution Ltd,
2 East Poultry Avenue, London EC1A 9PT. Tel: 0207 429 4000

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Exchange (symbol: FUTR).

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On your disc



Eureka! This month I've donned my lab coat, shaken some test tubes and mixed up the most explosive demo collection yet. It kicks off with sci-fi horror *Dead Space*, part shooter, part lesson in alien butchery, and absolutely not for the faint-hearted. *Skate 2* is a cleaner way to get your kicks, *Sonic Unleashed* proves you can teach an old hog new tricks and elf fanciers will love my final discovery, *The Lord Of The Rings: Conquest*. Add to that our selection of 12 more demos from the OPM archives, and this disc is nuclear.

Rachel Penny News editor



Switch your PS3 on, find the Game icon on the XMB bar and then select 'OPSM - UK Blu-ray Demo 2009/30'

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Dead Space

Get a taste of the sci-fi shooter that is less about head shots, and more about dismembering anything that moves. Set onboard an abandoned spaceship crawling with freakish mutants, it's got horror, lasers and zero-g action.



Bioshock

The city of Rapture has something for everyone, whether you favour wrenches, superpower-style plasmids or 1940s easy listening.



The Lord Of The Rings: Conquest

Enter the world of Tolkien, then start kicking pointy-eared ass. You can even dump the goodies and join Sauron.



Skate 2

Create your own skater then head over to Slappy's skate park to practice your nollies and kickflips, then complete challenges to extend the demo.



Sonic Unleashed

Forget about the Werehog, this demo is all about the Sonic you know and love: slick, speedy and hooked on those shiny, shiny rings.



What if my disc doesn't work?

If it definitely doesn't work, send the disc to Disc Returns, OPM, 30 Monmouth St, Bath BA1 2BW and we'll replace it. You can also email questions to opm@futurenet.com.

Also on the disc this month **Playable** Brothers In Arms: Hell's Highway, Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns Of The Patriots, Motorstorm: Pacific Rift, Mercenaries 2: World In Flames, Guitar Hero Aerosmith, NHL 09, NBA Live 09, Soulcalibur IV, Star Wars: The Force Unleashed, WWE Smackdown vs Raw 2009, Alone In The Dark **Video** Cuboid, Mahjong Tales, Magic Ball

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The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about...

The PSP revival

Massive new games confirmed for handheld.

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Zombie Vegas

Dead Rising 2 comes to PS3, goes mad.

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SplitTERS sold

What next for Free Radical?

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Cover story

Fans get arty with game boxes.

► **Page 22**

Resi boss

T-virus talk with Capcom's Kawata-san.

► **Page 24**



Split Second offers super fast driving and spectacular explosions. We say: yes and yes.

1 Is this a Burnout beater?

Exclusive first look at Split Second

If you'd said a year ago that the developer of the Moto GP series was creating an arcade racer to rival Burnout, you would've been swiftly dismissed as a mad-headed fantasist. And yet here we are, watching a muscle car hurtle down a runway at what feels like 300mph while terminal buildings collapse around it, and it's *mesmerising*. Because with one game – last year's brilliant off-roader Pure – Brighton-based Black Rock Studio suddenly announced itself as a top drawer racer developer, just a year after being purchased by Disney Interactive. And now the developer formerly known as Climax looks like it's outdoing itself in spectacular style.

Bangin' old time

Due out early next year, Split Second is an arcade racer set within a massive reality TV show. But don't

make that face; it has precisely nothing in common with Come Dine With Me. The 'TV show' angle is simply an excuse to take real-world locations and turn them into giant, destructible playgrounds in which you 1) drive incredibly fast and 2) blow stuff up. Essentially, it's Burnout with bombs. And right now it's looking great.

The level we saw is set in a massive sound-stage recreation of a West Coast airport. (Clearly LAX, although the team wouldn't admit to that.) As we raced AI opponents through underpasses and lay-bys with the sun boiling overhead, jumbos took off around us. Then... BOOM! A bus suddenly veered onto the road up ahead, sweeping a rival hard into a wall. BOOM! A monorail train running adjacent to the road came hurtling off its track and into the path of another opponent. These disasters weren't ►







The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about



Boom!



Vroom!



Geology lesson

The company that would eventually become Black Rock Studio was formed in 1998 as Pixel Planet, then bought by the Climax Group and renamed Climax Brighton a year later. Over the following seven years it created various games in the ATV Offroad, Hot Wheels and Moto GP series before being purchased by Buena Vista Games, now part of Disney Interactive, and becoming Black Rock. 2008's *Pure* was its first game under the Disney banner and it emerged as one of PS3's leading racers, with a metacritic average score of 83.

accidents, though. We caused them.

The actual driving model used here is simple enough, and certain to draw further comparisons with *Burnout Paradise*. Analogue stick to steer, **LT** to accelerate, **RT** to brake. That's it. Where *Split Second* comes into its own is that using the environment is key to getting ahead. By drifting, slipstreaming and instigating near misses you fill the Power Play meter, and when it's a third full you can trigger actions, such as the derailing of the monorail and out-of-control bus, by hitting **X** any time you see a blue shaft of light over an object,

vehicle, or building.

While the car and monorail examples are there to help you take out opponents, other instances open up short cuts or completely change the course of races. In our session this was best illustrated when the Power Play meter was maxed out, opening up Super Power Plays. Seeing one of these triggered for the first time was startling: the entire façade of the airport blew up in spectacular fashion, with rubble, fire, and clouds of dust strewn across the screen. It was immediately clear that the only way past this debris was to take a detour through interior of the airport, checkout desks and shops on either side of the makeshift route.

The next Super Power Play was no less astonishing – this time an entire terminal building collapsed, forcing us off the road and through a series of

hangars, then out onto the runway where a 747 was coming into land, loudly, in the other direction. Barely passing beneath its underbelly we continued on a course that, by now, had become entirely different from the one we'd started out on. It's these constantly changing environments that the team hopes will make *Split Second* stand out and stay fresh.

Tinseltown destruction

There's a clear Hollywood influence to everything here, from the way the game is lit – rich, bright oranges and deep, oceanic blues – to its pulsating orchestra-tinged soundtrack, to the

Dev talk

"It's helped that *Pure* has come out and scored really well and everyone knows that the team is capable of delivering quality."

Nick Baynes
Game director,
Black Rock Studio





■ You're a driver in a Hollywood-inspired reality TV show, trying to win races and outlast your rival competitors.



■ The spectacular collapse of the control tower is a Super Power Play that literally changes the course of the race.

EXCLUSIVE SHOTS
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dramatic, disaster movie way in which buildings collapse and disintegrate. It brings to mind Michael Bay's take on the Transformers, a comparison not lost on the game's director Nick Baynes. "There's nothing in a movie that we've tried to emulate, but there are a wide variety of films made by Jerry Bruckheimer and Michael Bay that have inspired us. Stuff like The Rock and Bad Boys. Anything from the last 20 years of action movies where your readers think 'that's a cool sequence', you can be pretty certain we've looked at that and been influenced in some way by it."

Baynes says that same influence extends to the cars you'll get to drive. "All the cars in the game are basically designed for the TV show, because they need to fit with the environments rather than the other way around. The vehicles you see in these screens are a good indication of

the direction we've gone in – you're not starting with a little hatchback and progressing from there. They'll all be powerful, robust, and fit with the carnage going on around them." So it makes total sense that one of the cars featured here looks a dead-ringer for Nissan's savage new GT-R.

If there's a slight dampener on the excitement, it's that Baynes won't say how many environments will be in the final game. That said, concept art depicts a level set in a shipyard and another built around a giant bridge (inspired by San Fran's Golden Gate?). After a detailed look at how each building is constructed brick by brick – thereby enabling them to collapse as they would in real life – it's clear that if Split Second doesn't live up to its potential then it certainly won't be due to a lack of detail. And right now, this newcomer is looking explosive.

Split Second is due to be released in 2010. For more hit disney.co.uk/disneyinteractivestudios/blackrockstudio

PS
013

13.03.09



2 The great PSP revival

Massive new games coming to Sony's handheld

By Sony's own admission 2008 was a slow year for PSP, but the comeback starts here. At the Destination PlayStation event in the US one big name after another was unveiled for the handheld – like *Motorstorm: Arctic Edge*, developed by Bigbig Studios, the team behind *Pursuit Force*. The new location is a snowy wasteland full of

collapsing ice bridges, while snowploughs and skidoos join the series' line-up of vehicles. Game director Richard Ogden told us, "We're hoping people will have an 'I don't believe it's on PSP!' moment when they see and play the game. Technically, we're pushing the hardware with a completely new engine, managing to

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Motorstorm on PSP is looking special – that's an in-game shot, people.

squeeze the full Motorstorm 'brutal, off-road racing' experience onto the console". Then there's LittleBigPlanet, which is being developed by Sony Cambridge under the watchful eye of Media Molecule. According to Sony it'll include "the same play, create, share experience for gamers on-the-go, in addition to brand new levels and environments".

Killer ap

Other big names include a special Assassin's Creed pack which will have an exclusive instalment of the series plus 'other content' and a 'Piano Black' PSP that's sure to make anyone stuck with plain old 'black' jealous. There will also



be a Hannah Montana pack with a lilac PSP, an exclusive Hannah Montana game and episodes of the show on UMD (Go! Cam probably a bad idea). Rock Band is also getting a PSP edition.

There's no peripheral, instead it'll play like Harmonix's PS2 classic, Amplitude, where you match on-screen symbols to buttons and jump between guitar, bass, drum and vocal tracks to collect multipliers. Finally, there's also a new Buzz! called Brain Of Britain, Madden NFL 10, Tiger Woods PGA Tour 10, Dissidia Final Fantasy and animal sim Petz (Dogz, Catz, Hamsterz? *Jesuz*). Now, where did we put the charger?

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Bike!



Roulette!



Guitar!

3

Tens of thousands of zombies on PS3

Dead Rising 2 to be set in a Vegas-style gambling resort

Previously on...

The original Dead Rising was the zombie holocaust played for lulz. You were photojournalist Frank West, trapped in a mall overrun with the undead. Using weapons ranging from the practical (baseball bats!) to the preposterous (CD cases!) you had to rescue survivors and uncover the zombie conspiracy. Comedy carnage aside, Dead Rising's party trick was displaying 800+ zombies on-screen simultaneously.

Despite all that talk about not coveting our neighbour's wife's ass, the bible made no mention of his exclusive zombie game. Just as well, because we've always secretly fancied Dead Rising on Xbox 360. Originally released in 2006, despite a notoriously wonky save system it's still one of the best games of this

generation. Thankfully Capcom has seen sense and confirmed that the sequel will also be coming to PS3.

Set in Fortune City, a thinly-veiled version of Vegas complete with shops, slots and shows, we're promised tens of thousands of zombies to kill in odd ways. They've even promised to fix that infuriating save system.

Gladiators-style power ball.

Surprisingly, Dead Rising 2 is being developed by Canada's relatively unknown Blue Castle Games rather than the Capcom team that did the original. That, combined with the fact the new hero looks like something of a douche, worries us. Fortunately, Capcom's development overlord Keiji Inafune is overseeing proceedings, along with key staff from the original, and the gambling resort is undoubtedly an inspired setting. No release date yet, but we'll have more for you next month zombiephiles.

Check out the Dead Rising 2 teaser released prior to the official announcement at snpurl.com/emrqb.



Dev talk

"I can't promise that we'll address every player's gripes, but we are planning on fixing problems that we think should be fixed."

Keiji Inafune
Head of research and development, Capcom

New blood

The idiot genius of the original lay in being able to use any object found in the mall as a weapon. Expect even more madness from the sequel, with the teaser trailer showing the new hero ploughing through zombies in a

The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about



Dead Rising is about two things.
1) Hundreds of zombies on-screen.
2) Battering them with weird weapons
- in this case an oversized phone.
Slay as you go? We're here all month...



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The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about



High art

During the uncertain times at FRD this concept art for Timesplitters 4 leaked online as staff hastily sent out their CVs.

4

Free Rad rise again

Crytek rescues Timesplitters developer from oblivion

Crisis talk

Crytek's crowning glory so far is its lush tactical shooter on PC: Crysis. It's a beast of a game, demanding a painfully expensive machine to render its fully shreddable jungles smoothly. But it's also viciously fun: your character's Nanosuit lets you stalk enemy soldiers invisibly like the Predator, then hurl them through walls like the Hulk.

Phew. It got pretty dicey there for a while, but having been bought out by German developer Crytek the future is looking up for Free Radical Design (now renamed Crytek UK). The Nottingham-based firm was placed into administration last December after the epic misfire of sci-fi shooter Haze, the cancellation of work on Star Wars: Battlefront III and the inability to find a publisher for the fourth game in the Timesplitters series.

Of the 185 staff employed when the company went into administration, only 40 now remain, and co-founders David Doak and Steve Ellis (both of whom worked on the legendary

GoldenEye at Rare) have left to form a new studio. Nonetheless, creative director Derek Littlewood was understandably relieved to see Free Rad saved. "It's a good day at FRD for once," he told us on the day the deal went through.

Monkey business

Look past the recent problems and it's easy to see why Free Radical's acquisition is a good fit for Crytek, and exciting news for PS3 gamers. Having created the original Far Cry and, more recently, Crysis (see sidebar), Crytek is renowned as a shooter specialist with tech to die for, but has been looking for a way to break into the console market. Which is where Free Rad's expertise comes in. So when can we expect to see Crysis on PS3? "It's too early to talk about upcoming projects," explains managing director Avni Yerli, annoyingly. "Entering into the console market was an important

part of our strategy even before the acquisition of Free Radical. To now have a team that is this highly skilled and experienced in development for consoles is just a perfect match."

When Crytek bought Free Radical it also took control of all its existing games. Hopefully that will mean work restarting on Timesplitters 4, and we'd also love to see a sequel to Second Sight at some point. Again Yerli won't be drawn. "We have always been fans of Free Radical, and especially enjoyed playing the Timesplitters games. At this stage we're looking into all possibilities, but it's just too early to say." Arguably the key element of the whole deal is that it will bring Crytek's stunning proprietary 3D engine to console for the first time. And if it's being used to power monkeys with machine guns then, hey, so much the better.

For more info on the fourth 'splitters check out timesplitters.wikia.com/wiki/TimeSplitters_4.



Dev talk

"We think [Free Radical Design] fits both into our culture and strategy. The team has a proven track record in developing great console and PC games."

Avni Yerli
MD, Crytek

The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about



5

Grand theft cowboy

Saddle up for Rockstar's Red Dead Redemption

Gunned down

The original Red Dead Revolver was an entertaining but linear shooter that riffed on the spaghetti western genre. Gun, from Tony Hawk's developer Neversoft, offered a more serious, free-roaming take on the Old West. However, despite strong review scores, it sold dismally, quickly killing off talk of a sequel.

Like cheap saloon whores (with hearts, obviously) we're tempted to break with the usual preview/review convention and just say 'buy this'. Partly because, y'know... *cowboys!* But also because we're a bit worried. Worried that unless gamers support Red Dead Redemption, Rockstar's sequel to Red Dead Revolver on PS2, there's a danger the whole western genre will die out. Certainly, the similarly-styled Gun (see left) found itself buried in an unmarked grave.



Dev talk

"We think that Red Dead Redemption helps to push the limits of what an open-world gaming experience can be."

Sam Houser
Founder,
Rockstar Games

But here's why we probably shouldn't worry. Redemption is set to be Rockstar's biggest release in 2009, and nobody does open-world gaming better. Developed by the San Diego studio, which also did the original having picked the licence up from Capcom in 2003, the sequel is the result of years of secretive work.

Playing as former outlaw James Marston, everything about the game bugles 'EPIC' – from the sweeping prairies to the turn-of-the-century setting, with the gunslingers of the Old West dying out as the railroad brings civilisation with it. The shot to the right suggests *The Searchers* as a reference, but we're betting the action will be more *The Wild Bunch*.

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Horses!



Loneliness!



▼ With well-placed
explains, and a
nostalgic title, the
game is the perfect



The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

6 Chun-Li says no to fireballs

We talk Street Fighter, buns and red hot balls with Kristin Kreuk

It's no good. No matter how hard we push her, Kristin Kreuk refuses to say which fellow celebrity she'd throw a fireball at. "I don't know if I can answer that," she tells us, giggling. "Chun-Li throws fireballs, but I try not to." So the star of the new film *Street Fighter: The Legend Of Chun-Li* is a beautiful Hollywood actress with martial arts skills *and* the morals of Gandhi? Maybe we're in love.

"I'm not really a gamer," admits Kreuk, not entirely shockingly, as we speak to her in her LA hotel room. She's just back from Japan where she's been promoting her role as the bun-headed Chun-Li. Despite playing the first lady of fisticuffs she's a novice when it comes to the game. "I played it

once with a friend after I'd done the movie. I played Chun-Li, and neither of us really knew how to play the game very well and I won! Mostly I just hit buttons, like a little two-year-old playing piano." She tells us her boyfriend plays games, but only *World Of Warcraft*. That's right; the funny, sexy star goes home to a man who likes pretending to be a blood elf.

Special K

Best known for her role as Lana Lang in TV series *Smallville*, Kreuk signed on for the action role just five weeks before shooting began. Her five-days-a-week schedule of kick work, stretching, tai chi and choreography might be enough to cripple most

Fight club

The 1994 *Street Fighter* film featured the unlikely pairing of Kylie Minogue and Jean-Claude Van Damme as Cammy and Guile. Following Guile as he fights Bison as part of the Allied Nations it was savaged by the critics on release. Luckily, Kristin Kreuk hasn't been looking to it for inspiration. "I didn't watch the whole thing, I just watched parts of it on YouTube, and I found it really funny. I thought that, if anything, that movie was really campy and terrifically funny."



High-kicks!



Running!



Thinking?



people, but she took it all in her stride. "Because I have a competitive gymnastics background as well as a martial arts background I like to train my body that much. For me the acheyness is a good thing. Mostly I was just hungry all the time!"

She might have the moves, but don't expect to see much of Chun-Li's trademark blue dress and hair in the film; while Kreuk loved the strength of her character she isn't keen on her dress sense. "There's one sequence in a club where I wore the buns and a blue dress as a kind of homage. But she's essentially homeless on the streets for a lot of the movie and I don't know why she would have that outfit on... unless she was prostituting herself!" she adds, laughing. We opt to remain silent at this point.

And... action

The film follows Chun-Li's quest for justice after the death of her father, but don't expect any Oscar-bothering emoting. "There's *some* acting in the



Celeb bio

Aside from starring as Superman's love interest in *Smallville*, Kreuk appeared in teen comedy flick *Eurotrip* and indie film *Partition*. Her big break was the lead role in a 1990 adaptation of *Snow White*.

movie, but mostly it's action. It's not a really challenging role as much as it's a really physical role," explains Kreuk. She wanted to make her character "as human and believable as possible... amidst one-liners and kicking!" The film also stars American Pie veteran Chris Klein, *The Green Mile*'s Michael Clarke Duncan as Balrog and *Taboo* from The Black Eyed Peas as Vega. It's yet to get a release date in the UK so we'll have to wait and see what fans and critics make of *Street Fighter: The Legend Of Chun-Li*. In any event, the producers seem confident the film will find its audience – Kreuk's already contracted for a second outing.

You can watch the trailer for *Street Fighter: The Legend Of Chun-Li* at streetfighter.com/movie.

7 PSN goes Pop

How casual gaming on PS3 is about to get cool



■ Peggle is just one of the almost offensively cute games on offer.

The name PopCap probably doesn't mean anything to you, but we guarantee you're familiar with the Seattle-based developer's work. Your granny probably has one of its games on her mobile phone right now. She might have even played it. Popcap isn't known for epic shooters or sweeping RPGs, but casual games. Insanely addictive casual games. According to John Smedley, president of Sony Online Entertainment, "PopCap is to casual games what SOE is to MMOs," and it's just signed a deal to bring five of its titles to the PlayStation Store. There's gem-swapping *Bejewelled 2*, the fishy *Feeding Frenzy*, 2D shooter *Heavy Weapon*, colour-matching *Zuma*, and *Peggle*, which features characters like Bjorn the Unicorn and was voted one of our sister magazine *PC Gamer*'s five most addictive games of all time. They'll all feature 1080p, Trophies and remote play via PSP.

Smart casual

New games are always a good thing, but the deal also bodes well for the future of the PlayStation Store. PopCap already has a massive back catalogue of titles ready to go, so it can provide a healthy stream of content for your download list. You can check it out for yourself and even download a few free trials if you point your PC at PopCap's website, popcap.com. And while casual games will never replace the likes of *Killzone* or *Burnout*, titles like *Peggle* make the console attractive to a much wider audience. Just don't be surprised if this time next year you're fighting your gran for the Sixaxis.

Killzone by The Man With A Hat



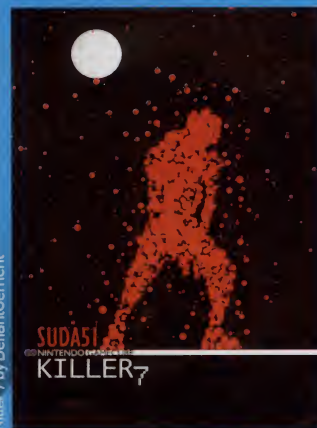
Resident Evil 4 by Dark Grey Fox



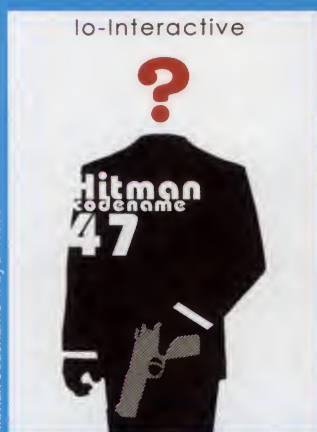
Metal Gear Solid by Olly Moss



Killer 7 by DefiantCement



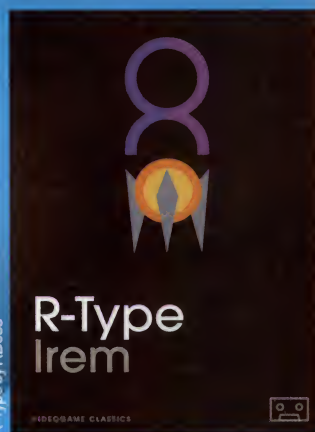
Hitman Codename 47 by a Moose



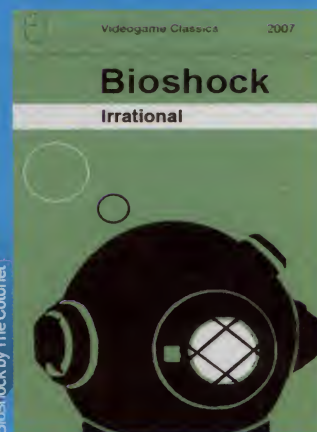
Max Payne by Sir Unimaginative



R-Type by KBoss



Bioshock by The Colonel



Shadow Of The Colossus by Dark Grey Fox



Portal by Manos Del Sino



Devil May Cry by Hashy



Bad Company by The Man With A Hat



8

Cover versions

Fans redesign classic PlayStation games' artwork

Put your ebay account down. These aren't collector's edition game boxes – they're fan-made mock-ups, and an example of what can happen when the internet goes ape for a good idea.

The credit for starting it all has to go to Olly Moss, who posted his redesigns of classic game covers like

Grand Theft Auto IV and Metal Gear Solid (see above) on his Flickr site. The link did the rounds and then the forum posters on somethingawful.com got wind of the idea. At time of writing there were 35 pages of posts in the "Make video game covers classy" thread, with everything from

Penguin books-style covers that beat the game's real art to Photoshop hatchet jobs. See the whole thread for yourself at snipurl.com/bevsi. Here's hoping that some of the big game publishers will take a look too.

See Olly's original collection at ollymoss.com or design your own and send them to us at opm@futurenet.com.

The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about



Guitar Hero by Ebbe Hauggard



Street Fighter II The World Warrior by Houdini



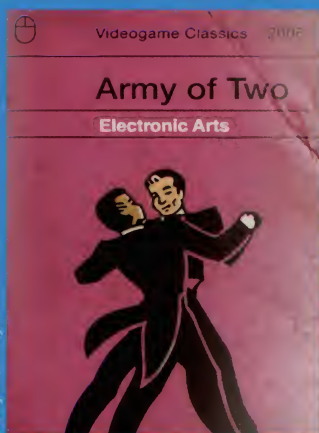
Fallout 3 by Urkani



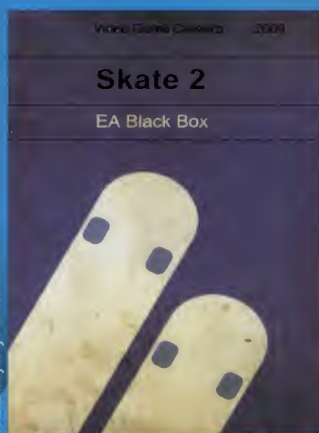
Manhunt by Ghost Captain



Army of Two by Edmund Door



Skate 2 by Leyendecker



Mirror's Edge by RecycleBin



Orange Box by Your Mom



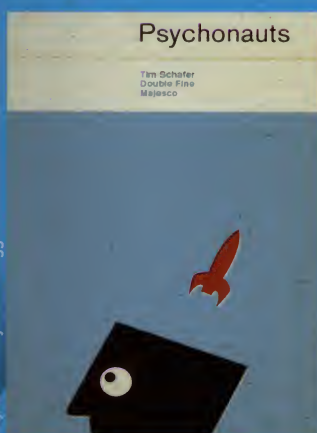
GameTitle by Mulefisk



Grand Theft Auto IV by Olly Moss



Psychonauts by Ebbe Hauggard



Grand Theft Auto IV by One Year Later



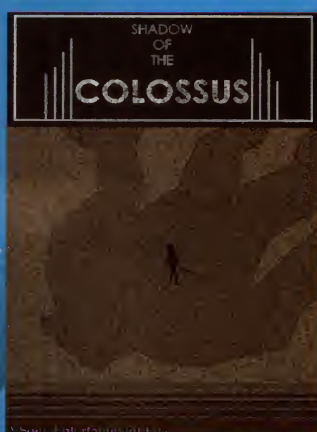
Hitman Codename 47 by Houdini



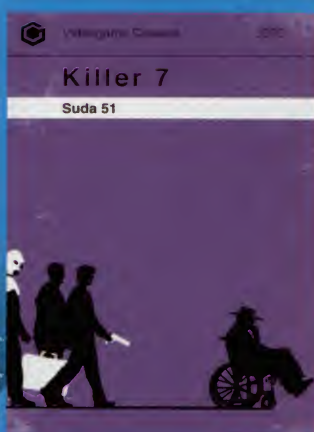
Katamari Damacy by Pointer Sex



Shadow of the Colossus by Liku



Killer 7 by SevyPlates







9

Kawata reveals huge pressure

Resident Evil producer on the race row, the power of Western devs, and doing four-player co-op next time

"We didn't need to change it for the sake of changing it." Resident Evil 5 producer Masachika Kawata is telling us why Resi 5 follows Resi 4's original design so slavishly. He continues, "Trends and times have changed since Resident Evil 4 so we have to tick boxes to make sure Resident Evil 5 is good as a modern game. We wanted new elements: co-op was one of the things we had to have. It's a new gaming system, new controls, etc. We ticked the boxes we needed." But co-op, the biggest addition to the series and for our money the best part of Resident Evil 5, wasn't even on the cards initially. "Co-op wasn't in from the beginning. When we started we were looking for something new to add and we settled on a co-op mode. It was difficult because we'd never done it before and there was huge pressure on the team, but we're pleased with the results."

Safety in numbers

The good news is that co-op is likely to play an even bigger part in Resident Evil's future. "We could've had a four-player mode, but we had limited development time so we decided two was best. In the future we could have many more players." He isn't giving anything away on what's next for the series, though: "We haven't decided yet whether we're going to work on a

Resident Evil 6 or not." Perhaps someone should tell that to Resi 5's chief producer Jun Takeuchi who recently said the next instalment would be a complete reboot for the series.

On the subject of Takeuchi, it sounds like working under him wasn't always a smooth process for Kawata. In a previous interview he described the game's production as a war zone. How so? "Takeuchi-san is a great leader and a great boss but we have many creators within the team," he explains, "and to make a good game we have numerous discussions – not all of them where we agree. I described development as 'like war time' because all of the creators are coming in with their ideas and there's a clash." Could such heated debates be the result of increasing pressure from the Western market? "Looking at sales I agree that Western developers are more prominent compared to Japanese ones. However, the situation is that Japanese publishers focus on games for the Japanese market. So developers haven't really changed, it's just a trend that Japanese games aren't appealing to Western markets. So there's a difference and as far as the numbers go, Western developers are doing better." Does he worry that Japanese developers will have to



Dev bio

Masachika Kawata has been with Capcom since the late '90s, starting on Mega Man 8. He worked with Resi creator Shinji Mikami on Dino Crisis in '99 and has been on Resi since Resident Evil 3 in 2000.

cater more to Western tastes? "I am aware that Japanese developers are starting to look into the Western market, and if they can take some of the share back that would be great."

Storm brewing

As we discuss the east/west divide, the race issue and Resi 5's African setting comes up. Our interview takes place before the game's release, but we can guess the reaction to some of the awkward in-game imagery – specifically a tribal village visited a few hours in. So we ask Kawata-san if he's aware of how sensitive Western culture is to certain racial stereotypes? "I'm not aware of the depiction of the native village making Westerners feel uncomfortable," he answers. "If you play through the game and see what we try to do... I'm just hoping that people 'get' it. This is a piece of entertainment and I hope that everyone is going to thoroughly enjoy it."

Keep up to date with all the Resi news via Capcom's blog at capcom-unity.com/resident_evil/blog.



The Big 10

Stories everyone's talking about

10 Does Lara Croft need a makeover?

OPM's resident Trinny and Susannah duke it out



Yes

Says our forward-thinking Gok Wan of games, **Rachel Penny**

I'm not here to deliver some pseudo feminist lecture about why Lara needs to get a boob reduction and put a yashmak on. I'm not worried that her tiny shorts and immaculate cleavage are setting a bad example – I'm worried they're making her old-fashioned. Like the old tart in the pub who still thinks perms and red nail varnish are sexy, Lara's 'small clothes/big knockers' formula is passé. Sure, her measurements have changed, but put her next to the new girls of gaming, like Mirror's Edge's Faith and Resi 5's Sheva, and she looks like a wobbly has-been. Stare deep enough into that cleavage and you'll probably find cobwebs.

Dressing down

The developers might think they're playing to the gallery safe, but because Lara *is* the Tomb Raider franchise, the fans will never believe the series has moved on until its heroine does. The quickest way to get that message out isn't to hire a slack-jawed glamour girl to prance about with a gun, it's to send Lara to the stylist. Keep her dirty pillows if you must, but give her a new Olga Kurylenko-style bob and clothes that say 'Armani action archaeologist' rather than 'Littlewoods 1993 autumn catalogue'. She might've been the digital pin-up of the '90s but if Lara doesn't update her look, and fast, we'll have to trade her for a younger model.

Do you think it's about time Lara got a new look? Text 'Lara Yes' to 87474.

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No

Says #1 Lara stalker and scourge of marketeers, **Steve Williams**

Lara doesn't need a 'family friendly' makeover, and here's why: it's not the problem. Her giant knockers (it's a medical term) have never been the real reason people buy Tomb Raider, and they're not the reason they're staying away now. Even *Lara Croft* isn't the reason people buy Tomb Raider. Why? Because, despite years of publicity trying to imply otherwise, Lara Croft is not what you *do*. Tomb Raider is a game, and tomb raiding is what you do. The problem is that gamers – especially in the US, where sales of *Underworld* were poor – think they're bored of raiding tombs. But Drake and his Raider-robbing *Uncharted* prove that's not true.

Waning appeal

The problem is the eternally sex-based PR campaign. It's creakier than Tomb Raider itself. An example: *Underworld* features new scuba diving bits that are gorgeously relaxing, totally in keeping and yet quite unusual and new. And how does Eidos present this fresh idea? As an opportunity to ogle Lara's realistically dripping bum cheeks. It's hardly a surprise gamers think nothing's changed. Lara Croft's last makeover – dark and gritty! – didn't make *Angel Of Darkness* any less rubbish, and sensible trousers won't save the next one. Eidos is looking in the *wrong* place. It's what Lara *does between* the cut-scenes that counts – *that* and telling people about it.

Do you think Lara Croft is already looking like a 'Lara No' to 87474?

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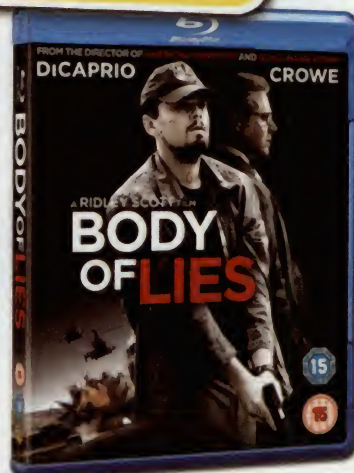
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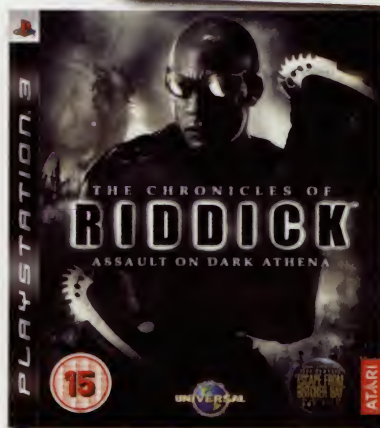


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Informer

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Your gamer's guide to the month ahead.



How the Metacritic took over

The website that can make or break a game

The most influential videogame site in the world doesn't even write its own reviews. Pulling information from around 140 gaming magazines and websites, Metacritic aggregates review scores for all major releases and averages the numbers into one overall rating, the now legendary Metascore. It has become the staple indicator of quality everywhere from investors' meetings to fanboy flame wars.

But why is the Metascore now such a big deal? Partly it's because the huge, internet-driven explosion of games review outlets over the last few years means that researching a new release can be a daunting prospect for gamers who choose not to stick to a single source. With games costing more than DVDs or CDs, and so many voices claiming to have the definitive opinion about them, to many players it's just easier to check out the average on Metacritic and make a buying decision in five seconds rather than five hours.

Gamers now account for the majority of the site's traffic. No mean feat when you consider that it also covers movies, music and books. But as site founder Marc Doyle says, "For a movie it's going

to cost you ten to 12 bucks, and it's a two-hour investment of your time. Whether critics like it is not a huge deal. But a game costs \$60 and 20 to 30 hours of your life, so you want to know ahead of time whether a game is good."

Under the influence

And as Metacritic has become an important tool for gamers, so it's become of increasing interest to the software publishers. There's been a lot of talk over the last year about 'the new EA', a publisher now driven by quality over quantity and yearly franchise regurgitation, and Metacritic was the standard used internally to measure that shift. In February last year, EA's CEO John Riccitiello bemoaned the fall of his company's average Metascore, stating, "Our core game titles are accurately measured and summarised by these assessments, and that is a very big deal," adding that there was "nothing acceptable" about a Metascore drop of a mere five points, from 77 to 72. Without Metacritic, we may never have had Dead Space or Mirror's Edge.

But there is also a growing dissent over Metacritic's impact. Paul



Wedgwood, studio director of Quake Wars creator Splash Damage, has spoken out about how it can be used to put undue pressure on developers. "I think it's a really good idea for a developer to go to a publisher and demand an additional bonus for achieving a certain review score," he recently said, "but it shouldn't affect their royalties or anything else. If you have a high-selling game, you have a high-selling game." While it's a good thing that publishers are now championing quality rather than just sales, it may sometimes be a case of 'new stick, same hitting'.

It's easy to understand Wedgwood's frustration at what might be an arbitrary difference in digits. After all, despite

Riccitiello's love of a good Metascore, strong ratings don't always mean strong sales. There's also much debate on which sources should be included, and how the value of different outlets' verdicts are weighted.

So should there be less emphasis on dislocated, averaged-out numbers and more on the content of individual reviews? While Metacritic may seem to emphasise scores, it provides an even bigger advantage – it puts all the words within clicking distance. And while reading through a few will take longer, you'll be doing yourself, and probably the game, a favour. Of course the score matters, but *why* it got the score is what you need to know.

Scores versus sales

Three games that bucked their Metascores at the shops

LittleBigPlanet

A game as brilliant as LBP should have been a mammoth success, especially with a Metascore of 95. But after a UK chart debut at number four, it dropped to 19 in week two, and then to a depressing 32. Oh sackboy.

Lord Of The Rings: Conquest

Scores ranged from average to full-on kickings, leaving it with a lukewarm Metascore of 60. Yet it debuted at number three in the UK all-format chart. Lesson? Well-loved licenses still sell, however bad the game might be.

Shin Megami Tensei: Persona 3

A Metascore of 87, and it still sold pretty much buggar all. The reason? If your game is too niche, too unusual, and has a weird, long Japanese title, your average punter on the street won't care how good it is. See also: Okami.



RUMOUR MACHINE

Insider whispers

Be still your beating hands: Tera Patrick will be a playable character in the first Saints Row 2 DLC drop.



Codemasters and EA will release new PS3 cricket games to tie in with this summer's Ashes series.



GTA classics
Liberty City Stories
and Vice City Stories
are both making
their way to the
PlayStation Store.

031

Formula One
will come to
PSP this year,
but PS3 has to
wait until 2010.

Syphon Filter
is coming to PS3,
according to a
listing from a
digital content
studio in L.A.



Kane & Lynch 2
is definitely due out
before Christmas,
according to our
Eidos insider

EA has two
unannounced
projects, a mixed
martial arts game
and a new shooter
with an unexpected
setting...



Love gun!

Gamer creates Portal gun for his girl

"I'd played Portal and thought how cool it'd be to make a Portal gun. But the main character is female." Luckily Harrison Krix, who created the replica weapon, has a girlfriend who loves games just as much as him. "I asked Emily if she wanted to go to the Dragon Con 2009 event as Chell - I'd make the gun, she'd make the jumpsuit. She said that would be awesome, so I got to work."

It's made out of a mix of materials, including florist's foam and plastic, and weighs about 12lbs. Krix has been swamped with requests for them, but he's only planning to make a few more. Two will go to private clients, one will be auctioned and another will be donated to the Child's Play charity. "This was a present for my girlfriend, and the more of them I make, the less special hers becomes."

And how did Emily react to the gift? "She said she wanted a ring instead... seriously though, she loved it!" says Krix. Turns out Emily got her ring - they're now engaged.

Light up

The gun's futuristic glow is thanks to a series of LED lights built into the plastic case.

Role play

Chell isn't Emily and Krix's first cosplay. They've also played Link and Midna from *Zelda: Twilight Princess*.

Meet Chell

Portal's princess

Chell is the hero of puzzle game Portal, and the girl with her finger on the ASHPD's (that's Aperture Science Handheld Portal Device) trigger. She has to use the gun's gateway-creating properties to escape the chambers of a test facility and the machinations of a computer called GLaDOS.





Will ♥s COD4!

Actor gets a look at Modern Warfare 2!

Will Arnett (star of *Blades Of Glory* and *Arrested Development*) loves *Call Of Duty 4*. Of course he does – everybody loves *COD4*. But not *everybody* drops in on Infinity Ward to play the dev team and get a sneak peek at their next project.

Rob Bowling, community manager at Infinity Ward, explained how it happened. "Will made an appearance on the *Late Night with Conan O'Brien* show... he spent the entire time talking about playing *COD4*." So Bowling got in touch, invited Arnett to the studio, and in the meantime started playing him online.

"We're big fans of the 'unconventional' rule sets when playing in the custom private matches," explains Bowling. "Many involve RPGs and knives only."

Arnett is currently lending his vocal talents to comedy shooter *Eat Lead*, but what are the chances of him appearing in *Modern Warfare 2*? "There was talk of scrapping our current project in favour of *Arrested Development*: *Gob's Great Magic Adventure*," Bowling told us, "but we couldn't score the licensing to 'The Final Countdown', plus animating the chicken imitation would be a nightmare."



▣ Rob Bowling (bottom) hangs out with Will Arnett and Hollywood writers Justin Theroux and Jon Glaser.

▣ US comedian Dane Cook also stopped by to see the new game.



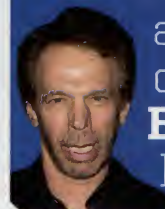
WHO SAID THAT?

V.I.P. quotes

"I'd rather keep the freedom and not have the respect." R*'s **Dan Houser** on mainstream media approval.



"It's a big romantic adventure." POP director **Jerry Bruckheimer** has gone soft.



"Playing a guitar is not a f***ing game." **Noel Gallagher** shows the *Guitar Hero* love again.



"We just finished recording VO for *Modern Warfare 2*. 'Cujo Two-One this is Vulture, solid copy on all'." Infinity Ward's Rob Bowling tweets *COD* secrets.

OPM HOT TOPIC

What do you think about celebrities in games?



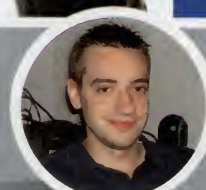
Craig Sullivan
Creative director,
Criterion Games

"Sports games feel that much more authentic if you're playing with the real stars – Tiger Woods Golf and John Madden Football being good examples."



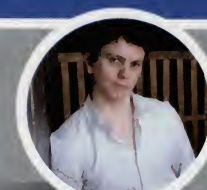
Ken Turner
Project director,
Creative Assembly

"It's great when celebrities contribute to games tied to movie licences. Like having Robert Downey Jr in *Iron Man*, or Vin Diesel in *Wheelman*."



Gavin Carter
Lead producer, Bethesda

"When it's just one actor in a booth recording lines that might be used in any situation, it's tough to get that perfect performance. It helps when you can start with a seasoned pro."



Ben Mattes
Producer,
Ubisoft Montreal

"Celebrities can bring some much needed exposure to a game. But too many still see it as something to do to fill their time in-between 'real' jobs."



Guns 'n' ammo

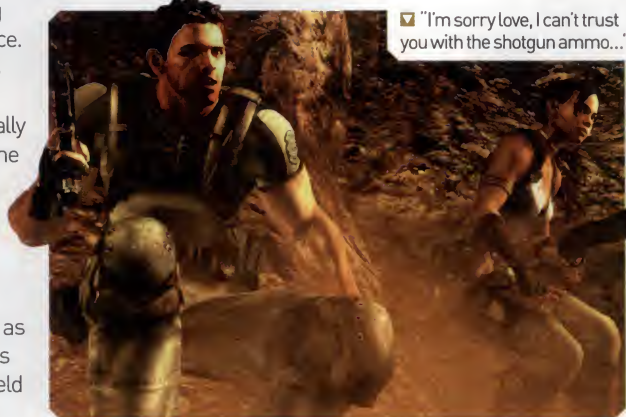
Tim Clark gets all OCD over Resi 5

Sure, I like seeing zombie heads come apart in a shower of bone fragments and brain goop. Who doesn't? But that's not why I play the Resident Evil games. For me, the pleasure of conducting neurosurgery using a shotgun is outweighed by the delights of an immaculately ordered inventory. I'm not exaggerating for effect. I derive a strange, arguably ungodly, pleasure from having all the weapons, ammo and herbs arranged *exactly* so. To my bloodshot eyes, 'survival horror' was a misleading name for the genre in the first place. The dark heart of Resi has always been resource management.

Being good at Resident Evil really means little more than knowing the precise amount of ammo required to kill a monster, *and not using a single bullet more*. In the early days on PS1 I'd often restart a section just because I knew I could do it without wasting as many items. Back then, your items were stored in giant trunks that held an infinite amount of kit and were

items on the floor. For me, and I suspect Resi's burgeoning fanbase of OCD sufferers, this was nothing less than madness. Leave the Magnum shells on the floor? But... but... *I might need the Magnum shells*. Consequently, I'd get trapped in a loop of picking stuff up and putting it down again, riven with doubt over the precise blend of munitions to stuff into my combat trousers.

Then came Resident Evil 4, revolutionising the core gameplay and, more importantly, the item



"The dark heart of Resi is resource management."

somehow spatially interconnected – thereby presenting a far greater mystery than any of Umbrella's bioweapon petting zoos. And so the game became a process of meticulously hoovering up ammo and stockpiling it in the magic boxes for use further down the line. As a result I'd invariably finish the game with too much ammo, because the ultimate boss would turn out to be not so ultimate, leaving me with a glut of acid rounds but a warm glow inside.

Everything in its right place

And that's why, for me, Resident Evil 0 on GameCube remains the hated lowpoint of the series. Although it anticipated the co-op play now fully realised by Resident Evil 5, it also did away with the Tardis-style trunks. Instead, your characters – Billy and (sigh) Rebecca – had to drop items on the floor, which would remain where they were until retrieved. To repeat: *drop*

management. The boxes were replaced by an expandable suitcase wherein items – which, yes, oh God yes, took up *actual space*! – could be arranged. Explosives here. Guns stacked neatly there. Healthcare in the middle. I get a wave of contentment just thinking about colour-coding the different types of bullets. And where else would you get a buzz from upgrading a suitcase?

So the more I heard about Resident Evil 5 the more I feared it. Having a real human alongside you meant no more pausing to browse your inventory (because your partner understandably won't want to sit through the endless faffing) and the idea of *sharing* ammo is anathema to the compulsive hoarder. But I don't hate it. In fact I love it more than ever. Because now you get to constantly debate who's having what. "Give me that egg." "Only if I can have the flame rounds." It turns out doing something you love with someone else is twice as fun. Hey, who knew?

LETTER FROM HOME

Nathan Ditum glimpses some beautiful scenery from the Red Bull plane

“The Red Bull flying time trial is flawed in many ways. You can't make it go faster, for one thing, which makes the leaderboard a top ten list of the most meticulous cornerers in the PAL territories. And if you steer off course or fly too high – to take a look at the sunset sights of the Red Bull jetty – you're instantly disqualified. But it's still really impressive, partly because there's a gentle grace to swooping around the checkpoint course – 'neeooww!' – but mostly because, as the first branded playable content, it's encouragingly fun and pretty, and absolutely free. Hopefully a sign of things to come, even if the scrum that is the queue system is crackers.”





Nokia N97

The N97 runs DVD-quality video and has a touch screen, a five megapixel camera and GPS for posting your location to social networks. (Your ex's ears just pricked up.)

£490

nokia.co.uk

LG Phone Watch

Colour screen, SMS, Bluetooth – it's all the functionality of a 1990s mobile, only with the added humiliation of shouting at your wrist.

From £100

uk.lge.com



Mathmos Phone Charm

These tiny bulbs and mini lava lamps flash when you get a call. The downside? Dude, there's a tiny bulb hanging from your phone.

£6

theglowcompany.co.uk



Digital Blue Lego Camera

Turn your innocent little angel into the next McG with Lego's new range of super-cheap camcorders. "We're done professionally, mummy!"

From £14

digiblue.com



Want that

Lust-have kit for PlayStation people

Stereo By Bob Turek

If purchasing this fibreglass speaker system doesn't make you blush, plugging in your iPod should do the trick.

ETBA

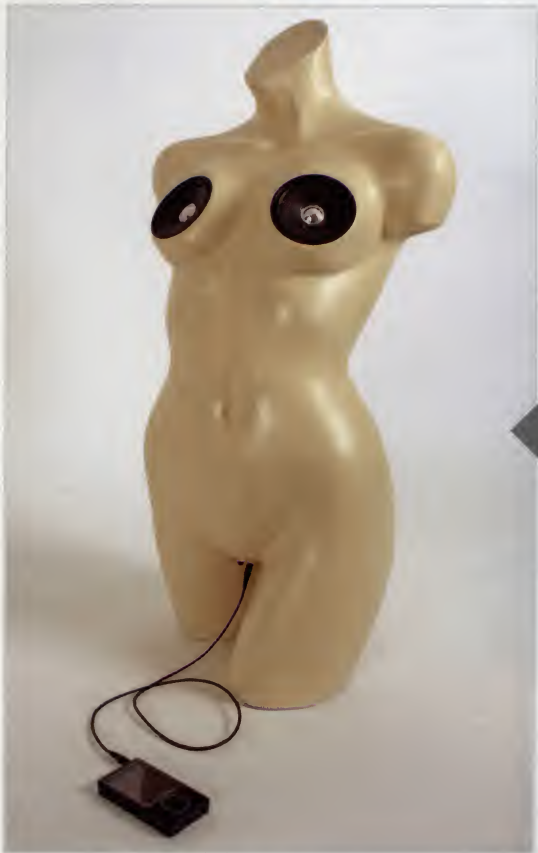
snipurl.com/baemf

Philips Cinema 21:9 HDTV

The 21:9 aspect ratio means no more black bars on your Blu-rays, because it's the same shape as a cinema screen. Fine if you only want to watch films. Should otherwise.

£3,000

philips.co.uk



Prices and availability of products are all correct at time of going to press.

Sony Bravia

BRAVIA

Design

Heads up bezel fans – while Sony's boffins have wisely splurged most of their time and budget on the Z4500 series' class-leading innards, the stand and scant few inches of screen surround have not been given the Dickensian orphan treatment. Resplendent in Sony's most pretentious new name for 'black' yet – Midnight Sky – close scrutiny of the admittedly beautiful panel actually reveals a dusting of star-like sparkles. Over the top? Well, if you've just spent nearly three grand to watch EastEnders – you've already sashayed over that line.

SONY

KDL-52Z4500

Sony's wunder-screen will taunt your eyes



£2,679
sonystyle.co.uk

In a nutshell

Until the human eye starts getting firmware upgrades, this vertiginously expensive slab of True HD is more TV than you are ever likely to need. The basis for our seemingly irresponsible hyperbole is the Z4500 range's second-generation Motionflow technology, which quadruples the standard framerate to a scarcely credible 200 frames per second. That's considerably more than your eye can physically perceive. What's next from the God-mocking, more-is-more R&D lab, Sony? Three-legged jeans?

What's so special?

The LCD-literate among you may already be crying foul, correctly pointing out that, at the highest end, TV images are broadcast at a *derisory* 60fps. The Z4500 is way ahead of you, however, taking adjacent frames and intelligently predicting motion in all directions in order to create *brand new* images to fill the gaps between. In short, this TV improves on reality, removing blur and motion artefacts at the same time. In your face reality!

Tell me more...

Fire up the screen and shortly before Football Focus melts your eyes from their sockets like Creme Eggs on a hot plate, you may just have time to give thanks for the panel's Bravia Engine 2 technology with Advanced Contrast Enhancer (for truer blacks than a potholer's night terrors), PS3-friendly XMB user-interface, S-Force surround sound trickery (see below) and Digital Living Network Alliance (DLNA) plug-and-play compatibility with untold gadgets.

Sound

Sensitively anticipating that buying the KDL-52Z4500 will have brought most buyers to the slick precipice of bankruptcy, the TV's S-Force surround sound technology removes the need for an independent speaker setup by creating an impressive facsimile of 360° sound from its two integrated speakers alone. The rib-rattling results will easily drown out the sound of you feverishly shredding bank/credit card statements before financially responsible loved ones get wise.



The facts

Motionflow 200Hz
Bravia Engine 2
DLNA compatible
S-Force Front surround sound
XMB user interface
3 x HDMI

Connectivity

Along with three HDMI slots and an iPod/Walkman-friendly Digital Media Port, the Z4500 also benefits from Sony's sign-up to the Digital Living Network Alliance, which is Nerdish for the TV's ability to hook up to (and stream content between) a world of gadgets made by 26 manufacturers including Samsung, LG, Nokia, and Philips as well as Sony. In short, this impressive Bravia is more accommodating than an aspiring startlet fresh off the LA Greyhound.

PLAYSTATION TOP 10 CHARTS

This month's heroes and zeroes

▲ Up ▼ Down ● Non mover + New entry

PS3

- 1 + Street Fighter IV
- 2 + Sega Mega Drive Ultimate Collection
- 3 ▼ Call Of Duty World At War
- 4 ▼ LittleBigPlanet
- 5 ▼ FEAR 2 Project Origin
- 6 ▼ FIFA 09
- 7 ▼ Call Of Duty 4 Modern Warfare
- 8 ▼ Grand Theft Auto IV
- 9 ▼ Resistance 2
- 10 + 50 Cent Blood On The Sand

Source chart-track.co.uk

PS2

- 1 ● Ben 10 Alien Force
- 2 ● FIFA 09
- 3 ● Tomb Raider Underworld
- 4 ● Call Of Duty World At War
- 5 ▲ Need For Speed Undercover
- 6 ▼ PES 2009
- 7 ● Lego Batman
- 8 ● WWE Smackdown vs Raw 2009
- 9 ● Guitar Hero World Tour
- 10 ▲ Mercenaries 2 WIF

Source chart-track.co.uk










PSP

- 1 ▲ Ben 10 Alien Force
- 2 ▼ FIFA 09
- 3 ▲ Need For Speed Undercover
- 4 ▼ Football Manager 2009
- 5 ▲ Midnight Club LA Remix
- 6 ▼ PES 2009
- 7 ▲ Lego Batman
- 8 ▲ WWE Smackdown vs Raw 2009
- 9 ▼ Star Ocean SE
- 10 ● Lego Indiana Jones

Source chart-track.co.uk

The PlayStation entertainment plan

Fill up your life with our monthly guide

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
MAR 09 The Boy in The Striped Pyjamas Child's-eye view on the horrors of the Holocaust comes out on DVD today. thefilmfactory.co.uk				13 Viral marketing Enjoy a sunshine break shooting zombies as Resident Evil 5 comes to PS3. Buy it, or try to win an HD TV and a copy of the game in our compo. (See opposite.) residentevil.com		15 Big hit bats England try to go three hours without someone having to resign in the Twenty20 match against the West Indies, live on Sky Sports 1 and HD1. skysports.com
	17 Excuse 3D can make And you're holding it right now. Share your thoughts, hopes and dreams with us at opm@futurenet.com		20 Editor's note James Corden and Mathew Horne mix lady love and horror as Lesbian Vampire Killers hits the cinemas. You had us at Lesbian Vampire. snipurl.com/bmb32			
23 Telling shop It's the Game Developers Conference in San Fran, and Hideo Kojima is a speaker. "Another reason why cut-scenes rule..." gdconf.com	24 Goodbye to BSG Bid farewell to sci-fi's most melancholy show as the finale of Battlestar Galactica goes out on Sky 1 and Sky 1 HD. sky1.sky.com/show/battlestar-galactica		APR 01 Oh happy day A momentous day in games, as Nathan Drake and Lara Croft finally tie the knot at the countless, private, country estate. snipurl.com/bmcc1	27 Mech it so Good news for the Massive Robot Fans! Facebook group Dynasty Warriors Gundam 2 staggers onto PS3 today. snipurl.com/bmb1	28 Author beards Dig out your black T-shirt, grow your hair (quickly) and see how the real rock gods do it as Metallica play the 02 arena in London. metallica.com	
30 Star power Angelina Jolie does wronged, terrified women to perfection in Clint Eastwood-directed drama Changeling, out on Blu-ray today. changelingmovie.net		08 Bird wrong They're not giant birds of prey, nor do they play death metal, but noise-rockers Eagles Of Death Metal are playing the Forum in London tonight. snipurl.com/bmd0s		03 Monsters vs Aliens Dreamworks new movie Monsters vs Aliens has all the monsters and aliens you expect, but they're in 3D! The future is right now, people! monstersvsaliens.com		05 Premiere action The title race (or is it a procession?) nears the finish line. Chelsea play Bolton at home, Man Utd go to Sunderland and Liverpool face struggling Blackburn. premierleague.com



Win Resi 5 and an HDTV

Because everyone loves a hi-def corpse

Resident Evil 5 is finally here, so load up on delicious herbs and flame rounds and get ready to end the nightmare once and for all! (Well, maybe.) To celebrate the return of the horror classic, we're giving you the chance to score yourself a copy of the game together with a 32" LCD Samsung TV so beautiful you'll almost be able to feel the African sunshine on your skin. To be in with a chance of winning all you have to do is answer the following question correctly:

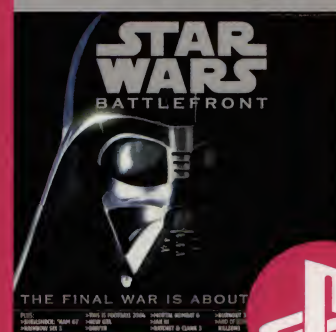
Who played Jill Valentine in the film Resident Evil: Apocalypse?

A ANGELINA JOLIE B SIENNA MILLER C SIENNA GUILLORY

Text using the word 'Resi' followed by a space, then your answer A, B or C followed by a space, then your name or address to 87474. Or enter at futurecomps.co.uk/opm30. Winners will be picked at random from all correct entries. Closing date: 14 April 2009.

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THE UK'S BEST SELLING PLAYSTATION 2 MAGAZINE
PlayStation 2
OFFICIAL MAGAZINE-UK



FIVE YEARS AGO IN OPM

This month we visit OPS2 #45

'The final war is about to begin' we boomed ominously on issue #45's stylish Darth Vader cover, heralding our exclusive **Star Wars: Battlefront** feature. Obviously, we hadn't figured on Battlefront II turning up less than a year later, but that wasn't as important as the fact the cover had shiny silver writing on and looked all kinds of sexy.

Although no one knew it at the time, Han Solo was the link between our cover and lead news: an exclusive reveal of **Mercenaries**, the LucasArts open-world shooter that would feature Solo as an unlockable character. It was a big month for announcements – also unveiled were **GoldenEye: Rogue Agent** (then known, even more shamelessly, as **GoldenEye 2**), **Free Radical's Second Sight**, and **Killer 7**, which we sensitively suggested could be 'the most mental game ever made'.

Previews was unusually high in pessimism. 'So far this is screaming 'average'' we said of **Headhunter Redemption**, while **Go Go Copter** was 'not so much blazing a trail as crashing and burning shortly after take-off' and there were the first signs of disappointment in **Driv3r**, which looked nice but had 'a worrying lack of actual game'. Thank goodness **Red Dead Revolver** had moved from Capcom to Rockstar and was shaping up to be 'this year's comeback kid'.

Nothing dangerously exciting happened in reviews. **Rainbow Six 3** scored 8/10 for being 'tense, strategic and thoroughly gripping' while **This Is Football** scraped a 7/10 and was described as hamburger to PES' steak. **Alias** scored 8/10 – 'we feel guilty for enjoying it' – and **Cat In The Hat** took the booby prize with 2/10 for playing like a 'migraine'. Mee-ow.

FIVE MINUTE SKIVE

Games to play when the boss isn't looking



Ninja Or Nun

Wimpy or warrior? Can you spot the Japanese killer in a sea of benign nuns? Essential training for the inevitable day when you're undercover in a convent, hiding from expert martial arts assassins.

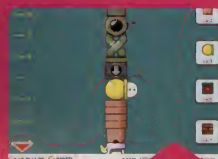
snipurl.com/avhkh



Left 4k Dead

We told you the zombie shooter would make it to PS3! Admittedly this is a slightly pared down version. Blast the undead! Watch blood spill! All represented by just a handful of pixels. :(

snipurl.com/14kdgame



Grow Tower

Pile up seemingly random objects – a plant pot, turf, bricks – then hope and pray they evolve into something beautiful. A remarkably similar process to how we make this column every month.

snipurl.com/avg4a

KONAMI

GOLD
AWARD
PlayStation.

PlayStation.

10

PRECIOUS METAL



COMPLETE
METAL GEAR SOLID
OFFICIAL GUIDE
AVAILABLE.

NOW AVAILABLE IN
THE PLATINUM RANGE

OUT 13TH MARCH 2009



A Hideo Kojima Game



METAL GEAR SOLID 4
GUNS OF THE PATRIOTS TACTICAL ESPIONAGE ACTION



PLAYSTATION 3

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INCLUSIVE
METAL GEAR ONLINE
MULTIPLAYER PART





Preview

51

JUST CAUSE 2

This is all we've ever wanted from life: a grappling hook to hijack jet planes as they fly past and a parachute to get back down again.

PlayStation® Official Magazine - UK Previews

Latest info on Planet PlayStation's hottest games

It's always a good sign when the previews section won't settle. Where should the new *Uncharted 2* shots go... Wait, *Just Cause 2* has just come in... Hold it, *Wet's* going to need space.... There's a new *Battlefield*? Two new *Battlefields*? It's like trying to arrange a poker hand while constantly being dealt new, better and more exciting cards.

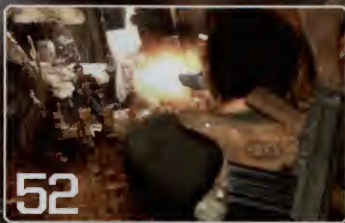
It's not quite a straight flush though. Putting it politely, both *Dante's Inferno* and *Terminator Salvation* are fixer-uppers. Although with such strong competition this issue it's not surprising some things left us cold. Consider *Operation Flashpoint Dragon Rising*, an ambitious, super-authentic war shooter with roots in actual military simulations. Or boxing sim *Fight Night Round 4*, which takes its already exhaustive approach to accurate sweaty man-modelling and adds realistic physics, working muscles, and Mike Tyson. There are some huge games on the way, and this remains the best place to find out about them first.



42

OPERATION FLASHPOINT DRAGON RISING

Turns out real war involves crying behind a tree as an angry Chinese APC strips the branches with a 120mm mortar.



52

UNCHARTED 2: AMONG THIEVES

Wondering what a \$20m game looks like? Check out Nathan's latest adventure as he searches for Marco Polo's lost stash.



55

BATTLEFIELD 1943

Think *Warhawk* set in World War Two. A PSN online multiplayer blast from DICE, the people who brought you *Battlefield Bad Company* and *Mirror's Edge*.



Preview

Quick pitch

Multiple wargasms

Your missions include full-on infantry assaults and stealthier, special-ops gigs.

Island living

The island of Skira is your giant, deadly playground, with 220km² of terrain including swamps, mountains and an inactive volcano.

This is my gun...

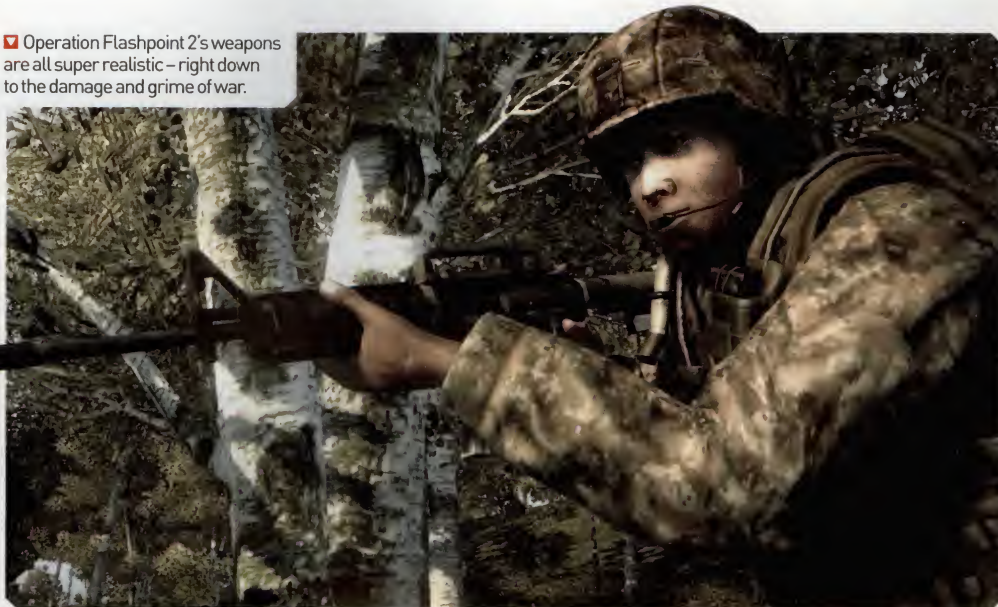
Real weapons are recreated with unflinching attention to detail.



"Intense and manic, Flashpoint takes its combat *very* seriously."



✓ Operation Flashpoint 2's weapons are all super realistic – right down to the damage and grime of war.



The Next Big Thing **Format** PS3 **ETA** May **Pub** Codemasters **Dev** Codemasters

Operation Flashpoint Dragon Rising



△ Hands ○ On ⊗ Safety □ Off

So it turns out war is harder than you think. The opening minutes of our hands-on with this ultra realistic FPS are a stern lesson in the dangers of modern warfare. Specifically, hot bullety death. On the surface the mission objective is the stuff of countless shooters: take your squad to capture a village (from the Chinese People's Liberation Army) and try not to die. Actually achieving this, however, means forgetting *everything* you've learned in other shooters.

Our first attempt is a full-frontal attack that would shame John Rambo with its tactical ineptitude. My squad were killed within seconds by an armoured personnel carrier, and I'm not far behind. Getting shot on this battlefield doesn't mean squatting behind a tree until the nasty red splotch goes away. It means bleeding out, flailing around and, more often than not, dying. Undeterred, I try a similar approach but this time with a little more 'firing wildly into the air' for

effect. But my comrades aren't having any of it. They leg it; the message "**** this, I'm out of here," crackling over the radio as a last goodbye.

Clinical suppression

Success, and even basic survival, in Dragon Rising means using brains as well as bullets. The village is set in-between two large ridges and a quick tap of **LB** pulls up a radial menu which enables me to direct my men to the top of the nearest of these, from where they lay down suppression fire. Using binoculars to identify targets throws a Howitzer barrage into the mix. This takes out the APC and sends the enemy scurrying for cover, throwing smoke grenades behind them as they flee. Then it's 'just' a case of entering the village to pick off any remaining troops. It's intense, it's manic, and proof that Flashpoint takes the art of war *very* seriously.

This is a shooter with a frighteningly obsessive approach to realism. ➔

Can't wait?
Play these



Call Of Duty 4: Modern Warfare

(PS3, Activision)
More Bruckheimer than Generation Kill, but still our favourite FPS.



Rainbow Six Vegas

(PS3, Ubisoft)
Strategic but fun squad-based shooter set among the bright lights of Sin City.



▶ The developer has used data supplied by the US military to make sure that Flashpoint's soldiers are as accurate as possible. Not only do they wear current camo and match the real army demographic, they employ real-world tactics.



Accurate weapon ranges, super smart AI, authentic military tactics. The attention to detail is bracing, right down to the pattern on your camouflage. You play as a young US marine on Skira Island, caught up in a turf war with Chinese forces over huge oil reserves. There are objectives to follow, but every inch of the island is open to you from the start of the game. You really can go anywhere, at any time; the only catch is that missions will time out if you ignore them for too long. Want to yomp it two miles across the map to muck about in a chopper? Fine, but don't think you'll still have time to save the day afterwards. Clive Lindop, lead game designer, reveals

that, early in development, if you failed a mission, the war would realistically carry on regardless. The team changed their minds, though, when they realised that players would be able to finish the whole game without successfully completing a single goal. Now, when you fail, you have to man-up and try again.

You might expect the emphasis on tactics to mean terrifyingly intricate controls, but after a couple of minutes I was barking orders like a pro. The HUD is simple: there's a compass, info about your weapon and a display showing the status of your comrades – if their details go red it means they're critically injured and bleeding to death.

▶ Two sides, two strategies – Operation Flashpoint is a battle between the USA's high tech kit and the PLA's cunning.

More complicated manoeuvres, such as calling in air strikes, can be accessed by simple, clean radial menus, and you can order your men to positions either by pointing into the distance or marking a spot on the map. You can be a control freak if you like,

5 big questions Vital intel on Operation Flashpoint 2

- 1 How realistic are missions?**
There's no hand-holding or funnelling when it comes to completing mission objectives. You're on your own, basically.
- 2 Are there really one shot kills?**
Depends where you get hit. Headshots kill, non-fatal wounds affect speed and aim, while critical injuries incapacitate you.
- 3 Can I do more than shoot?**
Your soldier has had basic training in field dressings and vehicle repair, so you can patch up your mates and damaged Jeeps.
- 4 What if I run out of ammo?**
There aren't any bottomless ammo boxes here, but you can loot any corpses you find for rounds and new weapons.
- 5 Can I drive?**
Yes, and fly, and travel by sea, all with your squad. There are 50 vehicles in all, from Black Hawk helicopters to patrol boats and Jeeps.



▣ You can jump into any vehicle you find, providing it isn't wrecked. You can even fix minor damage with your engineering skills. It might cost valuable seconds, but it sure beats walking.



micro-managing your men, or simply issue an order and leave them to it. Smarter, better AI is something we've been promised before, and frankly I didn't believe it until a squad-mate saved me from almost certain death with a perfect headshot.

Basic training

The only trouble with superior AI is that it means the enemy is *real* clever, too. One thing you notice when you're skulking around Skira is that there are fewer troops than you're used to in an FPS. Gone are the endless platoons of cannon fodder, and in their place are soldiers with a genuine understanding

of tactics who'll try dozens of different strategies to take you out. If you're hiding in cover they'll try recon fire – blasting random bullets in your general direction to provoke a reaction so you give your position away. They'll even cleverly abort failing assaults and regroup. It might sound tough but these smarts can also be used against them. Take down an enemy soldier and his comrades can be drawn out of cover as they try to help him.

This zero-tolerance approach to woolly gameplay and Sunday league AI means this is a shooter that feels genuinely innovative, if a little on the hardcore side. The crisp, high contrast

visuals and sound of gunfire ripping through the air only add to the authentic vibe. And bear in mind, our hands-on session used one of OF's smaller skirmishes. The larger scale battles promise to deliver real shock and awe, especially when you throw in choppers, tanks and grenade launchers. Likewise, multiplayer is a very exciting prospect – as well as all the usual modes, OF will have four-player online co-op. Just don't expect the luxury of time to squabble over who gets the last clip in the heat of battle. When a solitary bullet can take you out cold, it can't hurt to have some cover fire from a friend.

Q&A

Lead game designer Clive Lindop talks realism, tactics and DLC

Q What was the biggest challenge in bringing a notoriously hardcore PC shooter to PS3?

A We wanted to keep the lethality of the original game but have the pace of a console shooter. This made balancing the gameplay a major challenge. Additionally, trying to fit lots of mouse and keyboard controls on to a controller and keeping them intuitive was not without its problems.

Q Why did you decide to make co-op such a big part of the game?

A One of the core experiences of being in combat is fighting alongside your buddies. We really wanted to be able to deliver that as the centrepiece of our online gameplay. Fighting alongside your friends as you're pinned down by machine-gun fire, the enemy closing in around you as you make a desperate last stand, ending with you calling in an artillery strike on your own position. It's this adrenaline rush and sense of mortal danger we wanted players to be able to experience together.

Q What are your top three tips for surviving in Operation Flashpoint?

A Firstly, stay low and use all available cover if you think the enemy is near. Secondly use fire support to take out strong enemy positions; don't assault prepared positions without softening them up first. And, finally, watch your spacing. Don't bunch up so close that you risk losing half your force to a single missile, but remember to keep them close enough that they can provide mutual support.

Q How do you balance creating authentic combat with making a game that's consistently enjoyable to play?

A The game is very focused on the experience of being in combat – the adrenaline rush, the fear and ultimately the joy of survival or victory. For us the fun is that rollercoaster experience. Because Operation Flashpoint is realistic and unforgiving, when you succeed, the victory is down to your skill and tactics.



The game doesn't secretly help you through behind the scenes.

Q What sort of DLC are you planning for Dragon Rising? Will there be new items or whole missions?

A Well, we will be revealing more details at the launch of the game, but we are planning extensive support for the game after launch with a steady flow of downloadable content.

Q What will the new Operation Flashpoint offer players that the current breed of shooters doesn't?

A The game is about the actual experience of being in combat – what it's like to be under heavy fire, braving open ground to move forward in combat. You can't simply hide behind a rock and regenerate health in Operation Flashpoint; once you're hit it could get really bad. As such the game has a powerful sense of mortality and that provides an incredible adrenaline rush if you survive and are victorious.

Did you know?

The original PC game was adapted for use as a training tool for the US military. It's not just OF's guns that are real – the design team studied images of combat wounds for added realism. Codemasters' Dirt and Race Driver: Grid teams helped out on the sound effects for Dragon Rising's military vehicles.



Preview

Quick pitch

Double cross

Rubi is hired to save a crime boss' kidnapped son but is betrayed and left for dead. Cue revenge.

Smooth moves

Acrobatic gun fights and swordplay are linked together with wall-runs and flips.

Toe the line

A skilful assassin will be able to clear entire levels, start to finish, in one seamless run.

The Next **Stranglehold** Format PS3 ETA 2009 Pub TBC Dev A2M

Wet

△ Guns ○ Blades × Knees □ Shattered

Wet was dumped unceremoniously after the Activision/Blizzard merger, but developer A2M wasn't ready to just down tools and drink Pinot Grigio in the bath. At the recent Montreal International Game Summit it showed new footage. The obvious comparison is Stranglehold meets Prince Of Persia – large arenas full of baddies, with gun-for-hire heroine Rubi somersaulting and wall-running through exploding clouds of blood and debris. It's all very Max Payne so far, although Rubi's knee-slide move is definitely cool. Using it she can glide along the floor like a Torres goal celebration on a wet pitch – flying under tables or through crowds of henchmen, twin guns blazing. The lock-on system keeps one pistol

targeted on the biggest threat while the other can be aimed freely. As well as perforating enemies she can blast objects for environmental kills, plus she has a katana for close-up work.

Join the dots

There's a lack of coherence to the combat so far, though – flailing blades and bloody deaths look messily unconnected, while the animation between the admittedly cool individual moves also feels disjointed.

Everything is built around 'style paths' – high-scoring routes that clear entire levels in one unbroken combo – so the uber-cool assassin vibe depends on smooth, quicksilver animation. But even with some polish, this still looks like another shooty shooter. Do we really need more?



Hype Magnet **Terminator Salvation** Format PS3 ETA June Pub Warner Bros Dev Grin

Terminator Salvation

△ We ○ Are × Done □ Professionally

This is the moment we lost interest in Salvation: having spent ages wearing down and destroying several bulletproof robots in a fierce gunfight, we turned the corner to see exactly the same line-up of machines clunking into view. Again? *C'mon!*

To be fair, the actual combat mechanics work well. The zippy cover system means you can dive and dash between cover easily – a plus point when avoiding seven-foot robots carrying weaponry you'd usually see on the front of a fighter jet. The battles also feel big and substantial as you lead groups of human resistance through shattered American streets. There's no squad-based gameplay though, the extras are just there for effect. But the action looks basic: run, gun, repeat. And chewing through endless waves of hard-to-kill metal enemies doesn't exactly promise to make this a laugh a minute.





Special moves Rubi's killer attacks



Dive Fly through the air Max Payne-style to pick off enemies in slo-mo.



Slash Rubi uses her sword for instant close-up or acrobatic kills.



Slide Zipping across the floor on your knees makes a great surprise attack.



❑ Large, metal, relentless machines. Hard to kill, you say? Who'd have thought?

❑ Treat the damned right and you can saddle them up and ride them.



Tim Next, Devil May Cry Format PS3 ETA December Pub EA Dev EA Redwood Shores

Dante's Inferno

△ Hell ○ Scythe × Poetry □ Brown

When Dante penned his epic poem about a journey through hell in the 14th century, he probably didn't have the videogame adaptation foremost in his mind. That said, the mix of demons, damned souls and hellfire ought to be the perfect material for a hack 'n' slash remake, which is why EA has let its Redwood Shores studio, including alumni from the Dead Space team, loose on the religious tale.

You play as Dante, searching for his sweetheart Beatrice in Hell, but you're more beefy crusader than lovelorn poet. For one thing there's not a quill in sight – Dante uses the Grim Reaper's scythe to carve up monsters – and for another he flips and somersaults like an Italian karate kid. You can pilfer magical powers from fallen enemies, and you carry a holy cross, which you can use to decide the fate of the tormented. Absolve or punish? The choice is yours, but expect consequences either way. Smaller

enemies just need to be sliced and diced but the bigger ones will require the familiar button-matching theatrics to finish off. As you batter the undead, you collect their souls – and we'll bet our Italian literature collection they're the key to unlocking new moves.

Vicious circle

The nine circles of Hell offer up plenty of twisted beasts to bother, such as giant horned demons, satanic, zombie-style shufflers and, uh, babies with blades for arms, and you can even tame some of Hell's larger inhabitants to use as massive, angry armoured vehicles – although at the moment it looks distinctly under par visually. In the original poem, the centre of Hell contains a giant, winged Satan with three faces, which could make for quite the final boss battle. But as long as this looks like God Of War's younger, fugly brother, the rich source material could be heading for damnation.

Rip-off What Dante's Inferno 'borrows'

Big kills God Of War

Kratos pioneered 'the harder they come, the harder they fall' bosses and Dante's Inferno uses the same button-matching technique to bring down colossal enemies.

Giant sword Soulcalibur IV

Scythes are nothing new, and while Dante is supposed to have borrowed his from Death it looks a lot like Zasalamel's from Soulcalibur IV.



Deadly gymnastics Ninja Gaiden

Hero Dante's leaps and flips bear more than a passing resemblance to the martial arts stylings of Ryu Hayabusa. Not bad for a centuries-old Italian poet.

Plot Divine Comedy

The epic 14th-century source text charts Dante's journey through the realms of the dead.

Animal riding Golden Axe: Beast Rider

Saddling up the beasts of Hell like satanic ponies is nabbed from the old-skool Sega series, which got its own woeful remake last year.



Preview

Quick pitch

Boxing clever

A mix of clever AI and unique fighting styles means it's the most realistic boxing sim yet.

Create a Legacy

A renamed career mode with training, divisional rankings and multiple titles in each division.

They're in the game

40+ boxers past and present confirmed, including Tyson, Ali, Winky Wright, Sugar Ray Leonard and Lennox Lewis.

PS4
048



© 2014 EA GAMES. Format PS3 ETA June Pub EA Dev EA Sports

Fight Night Round 4

△ Duck ○ Weave × Swing □ Towel

One of the selling points for Fight Night Round 4 is that 'no two fights will ever be the same.' Uh, was anyone worried that they would be? The sense behind the hype is that the boxers now have more accurate recreations of their real-life styles, rather than the loose interpretations of Fight Night Round 3. So Muhammad Ali is able to use nimble footwork and rangy jabs to escape a pummelling, while Ricky Hatton can wear opponents down by getting close and smashing their ribs into dust. It's these unique styles, and the ability to fight on the inside or outside, that should make for unique bouts and separate the truly skilled from the button mashers.

The developer is also talking up an all-new AI system called REAL (Record, Evaluate, Adapt and Learn) that sees your computer opponent quickly adapt to counter cheese tactics – like repeated use of a one-dimensional jab, jab, cross combo. So you'll need to mix it up a little to avoid eating canvas. And unlike Fight Night Round 3, you won't always hit the target when you swing. It's now possible to graze shots off your opponent's shoulder or even miss a punch completely if they bob out of the way, leaving you exposed to a haymaker to the temple. Also, when you block you'll no longer soak up hits and stand firm like a mighty oak tree. Some punches will

knock you off balance or pierce through your guard entirely, landing on your chin and sparking you out.

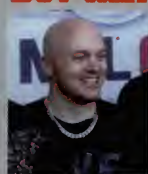
Technical knockout

From a cosmetic perspective, Round 4 doesn't look hugely different to its predecessor, but that's little criticism given that Round 3's looks still impress today. EA is also working hard on the previously soulless career mode, with a deeper training and ranking system. We're also hoping the full roster will see the likes of Calzaghe, Mayweather and the Klitschko brothers. Oh and Eubank. Just to see his face wobble like a tent in a tsunami as the uppercut connects.





Dev talk

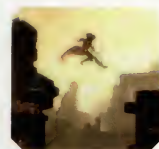


"Unfortunately, there is no riding in on a white tiger and you won't be able to perform a live rap song on a stage with back-up dancers before your fight starts!"
Brian Hayes
 Producer,
 EA Canada

While not a huge graphical step up over Round 3, the new character models do look absurdly realistic.

Could Be A Contender

Trine



This one sounds like it's going to be a winner

The premise

A wizard, a thief and a warrior walk into a bar... no, it's 'save the world' again. A pretend world that's a bit like Ico.

The reality

A 2D PSN platformer in which you use gravity to drop objects and create pathways through the fantasy terrain.

The hook

You can create boxes and platforms anywhere in a level to get past obstacles, or use the warrior to smash up whatever's in your way.

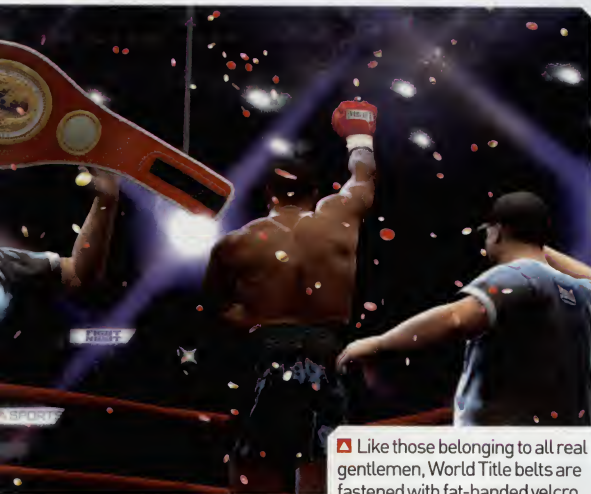
The inspiration

The character designs, monsters and fantasy forests are all obviously influenced by Dungeons & Dragons.

The chances

Combining the unique skills of the three characters with physics-based puzzles means there's potential depth here.

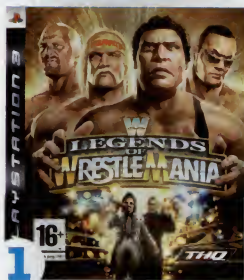
Format PS3 ETA Summer Pub Nobilis Dev Frozenbyte



Like those belonging to all real gentlemen, World Title belts are fastened with fat-handed velcro.

Source: Amazon.co.uk

Pre-Orders The punters' top three



1 WWE Legends Of Wrestlemania

Starring Hulk Hogan, Andre The Giant and The Rock, this is a crash course in wrestling history and an excuse to use your People's Elbow on the greats.
 Format PS3 ETA 20 Mar Pub THQ



2 Prototype

Shape shifting, speedy free-running and giant claws. Modern mutant Alex Mercer is the star of this sandbox adventure that let's you battle armies, monsters and amnesia in an infected city.
 Format PS3 ETA 30 Jul Pub Activision



3 Heist

Lie, cheat and steal to become the greatest bank robber of all time, then go for the big job: the San Fran Mint. Who says crime doesn't pay? (The police.)
 Format PS3 ETA 31 Mar Pub Codemasters



Preview

Quick pitch

Roadie rage

Band roadie Eddie enters a world where rock rules after finding a magic belt buckle.

Offensive lyrics

Music is a weapon. Eddie's guitar can unleash pyrotechnic displays to kill enemies.

Spandex army

It's a mix of platforming, driving and tactical combat where you order an army of followers to do your bidding.

Dark Horse Format PS3 ETA September Pub EA Dev Double Fine Productions

Brutal Legend

Brand New Guitar Hero

In what's shaping up to be one of the oddest stories of 2009, Jack Black finds himself as the hairy manchild at the centre of a tug of love between two superpublishers. Activision Blizzard seemingly dropped Brutal Legend after its merger, with EA signing up the project, but now Activizz says it still holds the rights and may wheel out the lawyers.

Metal head

If anything, the row is a sign that the game is shaping up to be something special. Development is led by Tim Schafer, the endlessly inventive and funny mind behind Monkey Island and

Psychonauts. He's got a knack for making great, if odd, games. Admittedly he's yet to master the knack of making ones that sell millions, but this time may be different. Brutal Legend is a bloody action adventure starring Black and hordes of demons rampaging across a strange heavy metal-flavoured universe.

The story sees a roadie called Eddie (voiced by Black) activating a cursed belt buckle which sends him to a prehistoric age of metal, where he has to save the world from the clutches of a demon lord. It's basically Army Of Darkness with power chords, as Eddie hacks, slashes and pounds hellspawn into a fine red mist using his two axes. One's a real

guitar which uses chord-based combos to unleash all magical attacks when he plays it. The other is just a big cleaver.

Schafer has also concocted a supporting cast of off-kilter characters and deliciously twisted creatures. So rather than wading in, Eddie will be able to recruit and then order around flamethrower-wielding rock chicks and roadies equipped with killer amps. He also has the Deuce, a monstrous hotrod that he can use to run over enemies like the Razorfires – half boar, half motorbike – and the chrome spiders whose silk can be made into guitar strings. It sounds mental but that's what Schafer does best which means, so far, it's all going to plan.

Celebs



Jack Black

What he's famous for:

Ad-libbed sarcastic wit.

What he's doing here:

Voicing the game's lead character, Eddie Riggs.



Lemmy

What he's famous for:

Shouting really fast.

What he's doing here:

Playing bike-riding bassist Kill Master.



Rob Halford

What he's famous for:

High-pitched screams.

What he's doing here:

Hamming it up as the evil General Lionwhyte.

The hook How Brutal Legend is going to rock 'n' roll

The heavy metal theme influences everything: from the voice talent, which uses a swimming pool of old rock gods, to the music-based gameplay. Button-matching mini-games let you play guitar while your army of followers is modelled on rocker clichés like groupies and head-bangers. All brought together in a blend of comedy and gore.



Eddie can literally melt faces with guitar solos.



The D-pad makes allies attack or defend.



The camera always goes for the epic angle.

✓ Hijacking a fighter plane is as simple as winning a short button-matching mini-game.



Dark Horse **Format** PS3 **ETA** September **Pub** Eidos **Dev** Avalanche Studios

Just Cause 2

△ Sky ○ Dive ⊗ Regime □ Change

Dev talk



"It's important we make this world feel like one huge playground with lots of stuff going on around you all the time."
Peter Johansson
Lead designer,
Avalanche Studios

Developers love to compare map sizes at the urinal, and Just Cause 2 unzips to reveal a monumental 1,000km² expanse. It's some way short of the gargantuan 5,000m² promised by new open-world racer Fuel, but what's impressive here is how rich the fictional Southeast Asian island of Panau is. Of course the original Just Cause was also vast, but there was a distinct lack of exciting stuff to do in its sprawling jungle.

The chief objective then for this action sequel is to keep returning US

government spook Rico Rodriguez – think Johnny Depp in Once Upon A Time In Mexico – occupied at all times. That means 50 missions, 250 settlements and a huge city in which to unleash chaos. It also takes a GTA: San Andreas-style attitude to vehicles and aircraft. (We had Rico flying a jet fighter within minutes.) The approach is hardly subtle – make stuff big! And loud! And massively destructible! – but from what we've seen so far it looks like being an improvement over the similarly-pitched Mercenaries 2.

The best feature so far is Rico's Grapple Hook 2.0 (our name, not theirs), which can now be used to tether any two objects together – especially fun when those objects are 'fast car' and 'corrupt government official', and you hit 100mph in said vehicle with said diplomat munching on a Tarmac breakfast behind you. We're told you'll even be able to chain aircraft together, though anyone with even a mild fear of flying may wish to avoid seeing how that particular scenario plays out.

Quick pitch

Wide wide world

Go where you want, when you want, across a 1,000km² sized Southeastern Asian island.

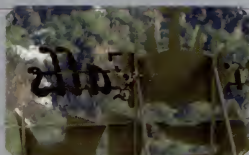
Free transport

Travel in (and fight on!) cars, trucks, bikes, planes, 'copters, boats and more. There is no – repeat, no – public transport on Panau.

Fun with fire

Set oppressed townsfolk free... by blowing up everything around them.

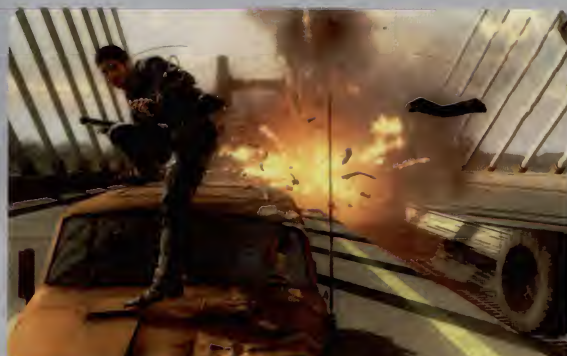
How it works Exploring Panau with Rico as guide



Overpower a fighter pilot, steal a helicopter or just traverse to higher ground with your grapple hook.



Missions and unlockables open up in reward for unleashing as much chaos as possible. Don't like things going bang? This one definitely isn't for you.





Preview

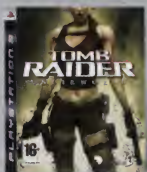
✓ Nathan Drake hooks up with Aussie adventurer Chloe Frazer this time out. "Hey fella, my eyes are up here..."



PS3 Exclusive Format PS3 ETA November Pub Sony Dev Naughty Dog

Uncharted 2 Among Thieves

Can't wait?
Play these



Tomb Raider Underworld
(PS3, Eidos)
Explore giant temples, shoot yetis and kick tigers in the face with Drake's busty predecessor.



Ratchet & Clank: Too Big to Fail
(PS3, Sony)
Insomniac's joyous sci-fi actioner shares Uncharted's spirit of adventure. The dev teams are pals too.

△ Nathan ○ & ⊗ Chloé □ K-I-S-S-I-N-G

According to Naughty Dog boss Evan Wells, the budget for Uncharted 2 is around the \$20m mark. Which is about one Wilson Palacios at today's exchange rate. The point is: it's big. Not quite Killzone 2 big, which internet rumour pegged at £42m (or a Robinho plus a Bullard) but very much still a blockbusting sequel to what remains one of the best games on PS3.

And the dollars are all going to be up there on the screen, in the form of sexier set-pieces, smarter enemies and a longer adventure overall. Naughty Dog won't be drawn over rumours of a multiplayer mode, but at this point it'd be perverse for such a high profile game *not* to have one. Of the specific gameplay improvements,

we're most excited that Nathan Drake, the deliciously self-deprecating hero, can now shoot as he jumps, swings and clammers over obstacles, suggesting less of a division between the combat and exploration elements. The implication is that the shootouts will often play out vertically, with Drake scaling buildings and cliff faces as he swaps bursts of full-auto with hired goons. (Note that 'verticality' is worth big points if you're playing developer buzzword BS this year.)

Girl troubles

The original Uncharted was arguably the best-looking game on the system when it was released in 2007, so it was a surprise to discover it only used 30% of PS3's horsepower. Now though,

Quick pitch City break

Search for the lost city of Shambhala and find the wish-giving Cintamani Stone.

Shooting the void

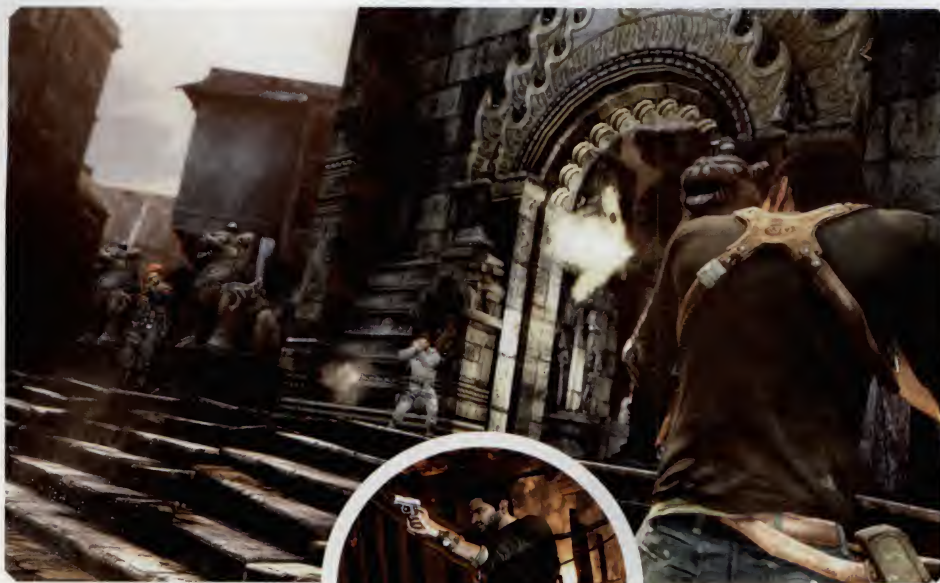
Your quest will take you from a war-torn Nepalese city to the top of the Himalayas. People will be shooting at you *all the time*.

Swing shot

Nathan Drake can now return fire while performing athletic moves.

Naughty Dog says the second generation of its engine will max out PS3's Cell chip as it brings sweaty swampland, snowy mountaintops and a Slumdog-style city to 720p life.

Joining Drake for his second adventure – the search for a wish-granting treasure thought lost when Marco Polo's fleet sunk in 1292 – is Chloé Frazer. From what we can tell she's not to be trusted, and yet the Drakester seems drawn to her like a drunk moth to a particularly sexy flame. His nemesis this time is some sort of military junta type with his own, doubtless heavily mustachioed, army and who, unsurprisingly, also fancies having wishes granted by a massive sapphire worth billions of dollars. Or, one Ricky Kaká at Man City prices.



▲ The game kicks off in a Nepalese city overrun with paramilitaries, pointing to an even more action-focused game.



▲ Shambhala is thought to be hidden deep in the Himalayas.



✓ Chloé is also at the shooty end of the adventurer spectrum.



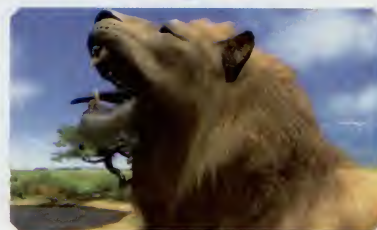
Can't Wait To Play...



Industry insiders reveal their PS3 faves

Pete Wanat
Universal Interactive

Afrika (in English)



"It's out in Japan but I really want in my native tongue. It's one of Sony's most intriguing titles - a game without any violence, that's really about exploration and getting a sense of another world."

The secret Infinity Ward game

"I hear lots of rumours but I don't want to give anything away. For me Call Of Duty 4 was game of the year and while they're also doing Modern Warfare 2, I know they're working on another title. The elements I've heard about sound so intriguing. The next Infinity Ward game is always going to be something I'm dying to play."

Anything from Valve

"I really want to play a Valve game on PlayStation 3. Those guys make unbelievable games and Left 4 Dead not being on PS3 is incredibly regrettable. I would love for Gabe Newell to come out with something on PS3 - one of my favourite developers on an amazing system."



PS3
053



Preview



Subtle custom paint jobs like this one have long been a hallmark of the Need For Speed series.

The next... Race Driver Grid **Format** PS3 **ETA** Autumn **Pub** EA **Dev** Slightly Mad Studios

Need For Speed Shift

Ⓐ New ○ Developer ✕ Gets □ Serious

Last year's Need For Speed was so startlingly average that the future of the series seemed doubtful. EA's answer? More! This year there are going to be four versions of Need For Speed in total, at least two of which are destined for PS3. There's the as-yet officially unconfirmed update from regular developer Black Box, and this.

Need For Speed Shift is a straighter more serious-minded offshoot, and as the gritty single syllable title suggests, it's a lot like Codies' Race Driver Grid (right down to the fact that they both want to be spelt with capital letters – GRID! SHIFT! – which we refuse to do).

Rhymes with quid

The tracks we drove were Brands Hatch and a London street circuit under the glare of the London Eye. It's

immediately clear that the focus is on simulation. Obviously, that's a change from the usual Need For Speed brief (hence 'shift'), which is why EA has brought in Slightly Mad Studios, whose core programming team was behind stern PC racers GTR and GT Legends. The result is an unexpected attention to detail – a g-force camera which shunts your viewpoint as the car accelerates, interiors so comprehensive they probably include rogue Tic Tacs hiding in the upholstery – and, for the first few corners at least, loads of crashing.

Slightly Mad has tried something different with the crashes. Aware that most in-game pile-ups hold no real fear for players (grinding along this wall for half a mile at 70mph is fine, right?) the studio uses disorienting camera spins and blurring effects to

make them properly punishing. The idea is that it'll encourage authentic driving without killing the fun.

And this is the basic rule that's applied throughout. The cars are realistically modelled so that, say, the power of an Audi will show over a Lotus Elise on the straight, but the lighter Elise can outbreak it at corners. But there's still a hint of the arcade in there, with touched-up engine growls that sound like mechanised warbears from the future, and forgiving, over-the-top handbrake cornering.

The bottom line is that this is the semi-hardcore sim option that will be used to balance what will almost certainly be a more traditional, casual-focused Need For Speed from Black Box. And, considering it's not due until the autumn, Shift is already looking and playing like the smart call.

Prequels Also in the series



Need For Speed Most Wanted
(PS2, 2005)
Street races and cop chases – the peak of the series on PS2.



Need For Speed Undercover
(PS2/PS3, 2006)
A return to road race pursuits but a sad loss of form.

A day at the races Speeding around Brands Hatch and the London circuit



Shift's cars look sharp and spectacular from the outside, but for the full whiplash camera experience you have to switch to the cockpit view.



Despite being squeezed into a PSN download, 1943 includes tanks, trucks and planes.

The Next... Warhawk Format PSN ETA Autumn Pub EA Dev DICE

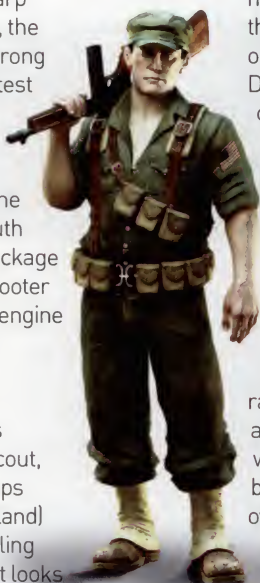
Battlefield 1943

Ⓐ Land Ⓑ Sea ✕ Air □ Internet

Like a little baby bear with sharp claws and a protein rich diet, the PSN has been growing super-strong over the last few months. The latest addition to its roster is Battlefield 1943, which is billed as a tribute rather than a remake of the revolutionary online shooter of the same name. In truth it looks more like a highlights package – an essentials-only quick-fix shooter that runs on the same Frostbite engine used by Bad Company last year.

Field of dreams

There are three playable classes (machine gun Infantry, sniping Scout, Rifleman), three classic 1943 maps (Iwo Jima, Guadalcanal, Wake Island) and all the dogfighting, tank-battling functionality of the original. And it looks



more like a fully-fledged game rather than a PSN miniature – not as textured or complex as a Killzone or Call Of Duty, but streets ahead of the usual charming-but-cartoonish downloads.

The only mode included is Conquest – nabbing all the bases until one side owns the map – but that's okay because it's always been the best, and there will be support for 24 players per game. They'll be needed, too. Our quick hands-on session with the developer was only half full, and it felt roomy and random rather than fun and frantic. The planes and trucks are weighty and solid, but it would have been nice if there'd have been more people to shoot and/or run over. Which presumably there will be online, especially since EA is aiming for a price point around £10-15.

People still do the usual post-spawn scramble for nearby vehicles. Team kill!



Gut Reaction

What's strong and what's wrong

▲ FirstPlay FTW

Our dynamic young digital soldiers are in place, ready to pipe early new demos and exclusive HD footage direct to your PS3. Soon...

▲ 24 hours on PSN

Team OPM gears up to spend an entire day online for a feature next issue. "Uh, what was the number for NHS Direct again?"

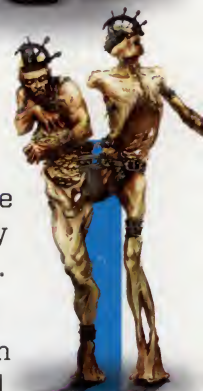
▲ Go Killzone 2!

Rave reviews, great TV ads, even better online than we hoped... It's all just how we dreamt it way back in 2004!



▼ Straight to hell

The surprisingly rough-looking Dante's Inferno is billed as being from the Dead Space team. Yeah, but only about four of them...



▼ The big fat kill

Red Mile says its Sin City game is on hold until 2012 while it tries to secure more funding. We say: it's already iced.

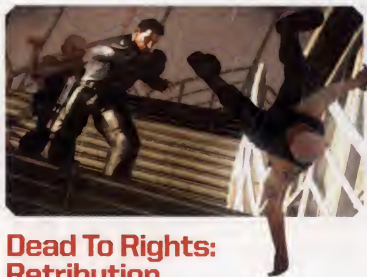
▼ Getting old

Years of marathon Master League sessions have left us with hands like a crow's skeleton. Now, trying to do special attacks on SFIV results in searing pain. Still playing, though. Obviously.



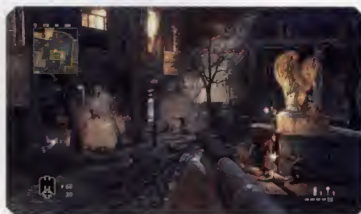
The Latest On...

New shots, new games, new info



Dead To Rights: Retribution

Format PS3 **ETA** December **Pub** Namco Bandai
It's a Bourne-inspired reboot for PS2 hero cop Jack Slate and his canine chum Shadow as they return to Grant City. Expect more emphasis on hand-to-hand combat. Wake up at the back!



Call Of Duty: World At War

Format PSN **ETA** Out now **Pub** Activision
Keep the Modern Warfare 2 craving at bay with Map Pack 1. You get three new multiplayer maps: Nightfire (Berlin after dark), Knee Deep (lush Pacific jungle) and Station (bombed-out subway) plus a new Nazi zombie level.



Fuel

Format PS3 **ETA** May **Pub** Codemasters
We recently sped though a mountain track chased by a debris-spitting tornado, and it's clear this weather-obsessed racer is undiluted arcade madness. Goodbye braking and precision. Hello huge cojones.



Unbound Saga

Format PSP **ETA** June **Pub** Vogster Entertainment
A PSN-only download, this follows beefy comic book hero Rick Ajax through a Streets Of Rage-flavoured scrolling brawler. The twist is that he knows he's a comic character and is trying to confront 'The Maker'. Post-modern!



Batman Arkham Asylum

Format PS3 **ETA** May **Pub** Eidos
Is it wrong to fancy the newly revealed Harley Quinn? Okay, so she's the Joker's psychopathic squeeze who's helping him murder his way out of prison. But on the plus side she's rocking the Suicidegirls look hard.



Mytran Wars

Format PSP **ETA** Summer **Pub** Deep Silver
RTS set in the 23rd Century, where the men in charge of Earth are looking for new raw materials to replace those we've carelessly spaffed away. The concept is so utterly bananas that this might actually work. It's a big might.

There's more...

Big PSN news: Sony has confirmed downloadable titles called **No Gravity**, **Bomberman Ultra**, **Texas Cheat-Em**, **Wheel Of Fortune**, **Comet Crash**, **Diner Dash**, **Hammer Fall**, **Underfire**, **Worms** and **Zen Pinball** for release in the year ahead. **Bioshock 2**: **Sea Of Dreams** developer 2K Marin is advertising for 'lead multiplayer designers' on its website. Kung Fu Panda developer Luxoflux has been tasked with turning the upcoming **Transformers: Revenge Of The Fallen** movie into a game, while Konami has picked up the rights to make videogames based on the **Saw** franchise. EA has announced the first details on **Madden NFL 10**: player attributes have been scaled down across the game to showcase superstars and make average players seem less generic. Amid cuts at Disney Interactive, **Turok 2** has been cancelled – although it had never officially been announced in the first place. The massive new **UTIII** Titan Pack (which should be out about... now!) features 16 new environments, three bonus maps, plus more weapons, characters, deployables and support for Trophies. Finally, EA has acquired the **Bourne** licence and is also working on a new **American McGee's Alice** game. You're right to shrug.

Battlefield Bad Company 2

Format PS3 **ETA** December **Pub** EA

This time the heartbreakers and lifetakers of 'B' Company are shooting the locals on snowy mountains, in dense jungles and, inevitably, brown (but still pretty!) villages. "It takes everything players liked in the original and ups the ante – more vehicles, more destruction and more team play," says executive producer Karl-Magnus Troedsson.

☑ "Yes, you can all go tobogganing on the mountainside once we're done."



back issues

Feed your obsession



Sold Out

Issue #022
September 2008

- Mirror's Edge
- Resident Evil 5
- Access All Areas @ E3
- Soulcalibur IV



Issue #023
October 2008

- FIFA 09
- Street Fighter special
- Mercenaries 2: World in Flames
- Hideo Kojima interview



Sold Out

Issue #024
November 2008

- LittleBigPlanet
- Operation Flashpoint 2: Dragon Rising
- inFamous
- PES 2009



Issue #025
December 2008

- Resistance 2
- White Knight Chronicles
- LittleBigPlanet guide
- 42-page reviews blowout

Back issues

Late to the party? There's no need to miss out...



Issue #026
Christmas 2008

- Prince Of Persia
- Guitar Hero vs Rock Band
- Killzone 2
- PlayStation Network special



Issue #027
January 2009

- Heavy Rain
- Uncharted 2: Among Thieves
- Resident Evil 5
- Overlord 2



Issue #028
February 2009

- Killzone 2
- 2009 preview special
- God Of War III
- Kaz Hirai interview



Issue #029
March 2009

- Resident Evil 5
- Home
- inFamous
- Street Fighter IV

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feature

God Of War III



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feature

God Of War III

**WORLD
EXCLUSIVE
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PlayStation®
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Oh! My! Good!

The big man is back, angrier and harder than ever before, as Sony Santa Monica declares war on heaven in God Of War III





Punch drunk New weapon, the Cestus, unleashes concussion waves with each devastating punch.



Maybe it's the screaming. Perhaps it's the one, wild staring eye darting about, frantically looking for help. Or the sound of the slowly tearing flesh. But there's just *something* about watching Kratos physically pull a man's head off with his big bear hands that really sticks with you.

The skin tears, tendons and veins pop – the detail is excruciating. This is in-game, too; the insistent clicking of a hammered DualShock button slowly powering the final and insistent slopping *pop* as the head comes off. Turning to God Of War III's senior producer, John Hight, I ask, "Is this allowed?" He shrugs. "We're working closely with the ESRB [the American equivalent of our BBFC ratings board] and so far we haven't had any issues." On-screen Kratos holds up his prize, the good eye still flickering faintly as the jaw hangs limply open. Decapitated smiley face, anyone?

"Some of these scenes are never going on the internet."

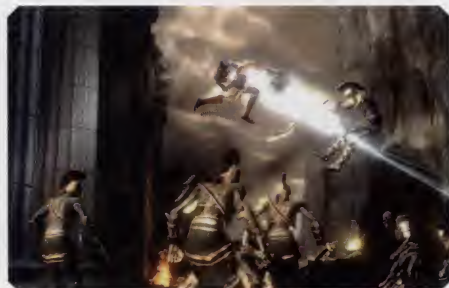
It's probably best to back up a bit here and explain. I'm sitting in a private cinema with the development team's leaders to see an extended, unedited cut of the trailer which features masses of extra gore you won't see online, followed by an exclusive playthrough of the first level of the game.

Front row

When I question Hight about the less bloody internet reveal he explains, "We can show you everything here and you can write about it, but on the internet we have to be responsible. Some of these scenes are never going to be put on the internet, at least not by us – they're

not appropriate for younger audiences."

Not that the gore is a surprise. The series is famous for its eviscerating kills, and GOW III picks up the story where the previous PS2 game left off – as Kratos attacks Mount Olympus atop a race of giant elder gods called the Titans. No preamble, just straight into an apocalyptic war in heaven. Bam! When we see Kratos for the first time he's just reached a fortified city, rumoured to hide the Door Of Eos, a secret way into Olympus. Sony shows off its new hi-res Ghost Of Sparta with a lingering opening shot. The detail is impressive: his muscles flex, veins pop and anger ripples across his face. Producer Steve Caterson explains, "The current Kratos model couldn't run on PS2. Too many polygons, too many joints – it would cripple the PS2." Art director Ken Feldman adds, "If you look at Kratos right now, everything is happening in real time, in-game. If you zoom into his face I want to see him snarl, I want to see his forehead wrinkle. If I pull out to an action sequence I want to see him ripping beasts in half with that that level of visceral action and violence." ►



► Once removed from its owner, the god Helios' head enables Kratos to stun his enemies before he slices them up.

■ Kratos' newest ability sees him using the god Helios' head as a magic torch to stun enemies. Just got... to get... it off... first...





Body builder Kratos' animation has muscles that move visibly and veins that pop up as he fights.

❑ The Chimera is formed from three creatures: lion, goat and snake, all of who require a formal introduction to your Blades.

him to the floor as they bundle on top to pin him. A frantic bout of stick-wagging, however, enables Kratos to break free, scattering bodies through the air. After a few more looping, spiralling attacks he reveals a new move – grabbing one of the warriors and using him like a battering ram to charge through the others, knocking them to the floor before smashing his victim into the wall and pounding his skull to pulp. As he turns to mop up the survivors, a huge armoured centaur appears, rearing up and rallying the remaining enemies. Director Stig Asmussen explains, "The centaur is our commander. When he's there the AI are smarter – they'll charge when he orders them. The strategy changes now that he's out there."

With different priorities Kratos switches to

a new weapon, the Fire Bow. Using it to shoot flaming arrows into the horde, it sets some of them ablaze, who in turn catch others alight. With the grunts occupied (read: burning) Kratos turns his attention to the centaur, avoiding his huge spear and softening him up with a flurry of blows until he appears above his head, showing he's ready for a finishing move. The next bit isn't for the faint hearted: Kratos jumps up and smashes the centaur to the floor. As he struggles to get up the Spartan drives a blade deep between its forelegs and forces it along the length of his belly, slicing him open like fat screaming fish. Intestines, stomach and assorted internal organs spill out onto the floor. Caterson is pleased with the response – a mixture of teeth-sucking winces and cheers. "We always

It doesn't take long for the bloodshed to start. The camera pans around to reveal a building overshadowed by a huge lava-tinted Titan, several hundred feet tall, who's swatting at the Greek sun god Helios as he flies past in his chariot. A horde of undead soldiers materialise and Kratos is swift to act, unleashing his whip-like Blades in flaming arcs that smash and slice the skeletal ranks. At one point they overpower Kratos, forcing

Kratology

The story so far...

Ten years prior to the first game Kratos is a captain in the Spartan army. When he falls in battle to a barbarian horde he sells his soul to Ares, the god of war, in return for victory. Ares then smites all Kratos' enemies and gives him the Blades Of Chaos and incredible power. The downside? Ares tricks him into killing his own family to free him up a bit and their ashes stain his skin white as a permanent reminder of his sins.

God Of War: Chains Of Olympus

PSP, 2008

During Kratos' service to Ares, Athena tasks him to locate the sun god Helios who's disappeared. As a result he uncovers a plan by the goddess Persephone to commit suicide by destroying existence and so chains Atlas to the roof of the underworld to support the world for all eternity.



God Of War PS2, 2005

Haunted by the nightmares of his dead wife and child, Kratos turns his back on the gods. Athena then asks him to kill Ares, who's attacking her city. To do so means finding Pandora's Box which can grant a mortal the power to kill a god. When Ares is dead, Kratos assumes his place as the new god of war.



Zip it! Certain enemies carry around a stomach full of guts, ready to spill out thanks to the new Zipper Tech.

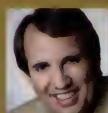
Meet the makers

GOW III's heroes speak



Stig Asmussen,
game director

"There's a really good track record with this game and I don't want to mess it up. But the success of this game is based on the strength of the team and the talent on this team. These people are just an incredible wealth of talent and creativity - they're amazing to work with and I feel fortunate to be a part of it."



John Hight,
senior producer

"We want a realistic experience. It would feel weird if we tamed it down. This is a god-Spartan warrior going up against enemies with blades in his hands. You're not walking past heaps of gore all over the floor - it's there for the story. If you're facing a centaur that's 12-foot tall it makes Kratos feel pretty powerful to be able to dispatch him."



Steve Caterson,
producer

"This is all about the final war. You're either going to be in the middle of the war as an active participating member or you're going to be working in the side lines while it rages all around you. War is going to be a huge part of the final story arc."



"Kratos slices the centaur open like a screaming fish."

wanted to do that, we just couldn't on PS2. We term it Zipper Technology. There are joints holding the skin together and as the animation plays, the joints separate to split open the body cavity." God bless the Cell processor.

The lion's share

With the centaur stiffening in a pool of guts, Kratos can now focus on the next problem. Specifically the raging battle between Helios and the Titan blocking his path. Ahead is a ballista, an enormous crossbow. It's got potential but before Kratos can use it a

Chimera appears. (The classical kind rather than Resistance 2's knife-faced invaders.) A lion with a snake for a tail and a horned goat's head emerging from between its shoulder blades, it's a mini-boss that needs to be dispatched before Kratos can continue.

The creature's snapping snake tail is the first casualty, quickly sliced off and discarded. The butting goat head takes a little longer and by the time Kratos slices its neck away, partially severing it, Zipper Tech has left the creature's body covered in open gashes and wounds. Finally, the main lion part attacks, ►►

God Of War: Betrayal

Mobile phone, 2007

When the god Hera's pet, Argos, is killed, Kratos is framed for the crime. As Kratos fights through Greece to find out who's behind it, Zeus sends a messenger to warn him about his excessive violence, who he then kills. Sort of proving the point.



God Of War II PS2, 2007

Kratos is stripped of his powers by Zeus to 'end the cycle', alluding to the fact that he is Zeus' son and destined to kill his father. Kratos searches out the Sisters Of Fate to change the past and end his suffering. He fails, but does bring back a race of ancient gods, the Titans, and declares war on Olympus.



feature

God Of War III

The team cont...



Ken Feldman,
art director

"Our character artists had a lot of men flexing on their desk. We have videos of Arnold Schwarzenegger, and men's magazine Muscle & Fitness. There's a level of reality but also a comic book level of anatomy and aggression you're used to seeing, and you have to blend those."



Adam Puhl, lead
combat designer

"This game couldn't be made with mo-cap. If I need to hit on frame five the animators find a way to make it hit. We work alongside the animation team who hand-animate everything so if something's not powerful enough, we go back and work with the animator on getting it to feel that way."



Todd Papy,
design director

"We build on three pillars: combat, puzzles and navigation - it's how we mix those and make everything feel fresh. That's what we shoot for; if there's one key word that encompasses the design it's variety. As soon as the player turns the corner there's something new. New 'wow' moment, new puzzle, new monster."



"Cyclops are not a problem - Kratos can now ride them."

only to be beaten into submission and, as it lays stunned, Kratos snaps off a horn and stabs it through the head to finish it off.

With the Chimera out of the way Kratos takes control of the ballista and launches a massive bolt into the sky. It smashes away a chunk of Helios' chariot, enabling the Titan to catch the god and hurl him into a mountain, where he lands among the shattered remains of his ride. Kratos needs the god though to find the Door Of Eos, and so leaps up, grabbing a harpy flying overhead. He then jumps between them like feathery monkey bars, crossing over a ravine, stabbing and gutting the mythical monsters as he goes.

Once clear of the chasm Kratos crashes the final harpy to the floor using its explosive dive bomb attack to scatter the awaiting enemies before switching to a new weapon, the Cestus. As Kratos lays into his opponents, swinging these enormous bronze gauntlets like a boxer, lead combat designer Adam Puhl explains, "The Cestus has these giant rings on them. As they slide forwards they create concussion that blasts enemies but only when you make contact. So you want to get in close - your strategy changes." The move set of the Cestus also mirrors the Blades, enabling you to change seamlessly between the two, mid-combo. So after a few punishing



Titanic The Titans are helping Kratos assault Olympus, home of the gods, to extract his revenge.

The art of war New weapons and enemy types mean combat will be more tactical than ever.

punches, Kratos switches back to the Blades, carving through the survivors with wide slashing attacks.

Ride of the valkyrie

With the skeleton grunts dispatched, the broken body of Helios is within reach but protected by shield-carrying warriors. The battle is one-sided – neither Kratos' Blades or Cestus can break the shields. That is until a cyclops turns up. Usually that would represent a problem but, like the harpies, Kratos can now ride them. From the beast's back he's able to control the lumbering giant who then stumbles and thrashes around with a huge tree trunk club, smashing the soldiers' defences to dust. A second swipe then finishes them off. That just leaves the cyclops which Kratos dispatches in classic GOW-style by pulling the eye out. The shiny new levels of detail mean there's now a



Expect to fight more monsters than ever before, in battles with *hundreds* of enemies to slash through.



High flier Icaras' wings enables Kratos to get around quickly, flying at speed through narrow tunnels.

"A GOW I level would fit in the palm of a Titan's hand."

stretchy tug of war with the veiny optic nerve before it snaps, finally killing the monster.

With all the resistance crushed, stabbed or just generally bleeding dry that leaves nothing between Kratos and what he wants: Helios' head. Which is where we came in. It's not just a trophy, though, it's a new power-up. Once torn from the body the eyes and mouth emit a godly light, like a lantern, that has several functions. Firstly it reveals hidden things – like the Door Of Eos which is concealed in the mountain wall, its rocky surface melting away under the torch-like beam. It also blinds enemies, stunning them for a few seconds. It's basically a celestial Maglite.

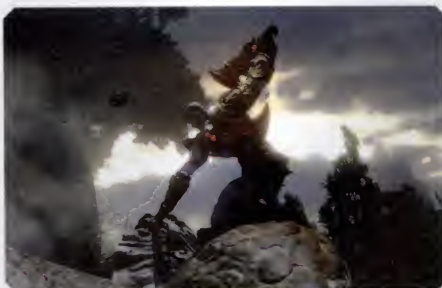
Olympic proportions

So far, the bloody and beautifully rendered slaughter is up to spec for the series. Kratos is as merciless an anti-hero as he's ever been and the almost comically over-the-top gore provides just the right mix of shock and entertainment. But GOW III has a pretty big trick up its sleeve with what the team are

calling Titan Gameplay. Those giant god-like colossi are more than just set dressing, they're levels. Huge chunks of the game will take place on their backs, arms, heads, which according to Asmussen is something that's been a long time coming. "Thinking in that kind of scale is something that happened in God Of War I when Dave [Jaffe] wanted a temple on the back of a Titan and God Of War II where Cory [Barlog] had a level built on Atlas. The difference this time is that it's not crafty Hollywood-style tricks, we're doing it

for real." So rather than levels built to look like they're on a large moving creature, they actually are on vast, fully animated characters – just like in the trailer where the forest Kratos is fighting through turns out to be on the back of a large Titan climbing Olympus. And while that's the only example revealed so far, Asmussen is keen to emphasise the fact that the trailer uses the in-game engine: "It's all 100 percent real. The engine spits out raw frames and we put those frames into Adobe Premier. (A video editing package.) Everything you're seeing is using in-game resolution, texture and effects."

The key thing the team wants to get across is that these creatures are big. One measurement mentioned is "bigger than the Sears Tower" (1,730ft fact fans) and that a



Special moves used to finish enemies are now even more gory. Snapping veins, spilling guts – it's brilliantly gross.

Hard right Moving chains, falling rocks and collapsing beams all have to be avoided to get from A to B.

Ico

"Ico had just come out, and Devil May Cry, and we [David Jaffe and Tim Moss] were fans of those games and that kind of adventure - we wanted to take our studio in that direction."

Ken Feldman, art director

Onimusha

"Originally I had been playing Onimusha and I said, 'Well, what if we did pretty much a similar game but instead of ancient Japanese mythology, what if we did it with Greek mythology?'"

David Jaffe, director (GOW I)

Ed Norton

"We kept going back to Ed Norton in American History X, because we were saying, 'That guy, he really represents the kind of brutal nature that I want this character to have.'"

David Jaffe, director (GOW I)



In the mix

Kratos' influences as revealed by his designers



American McGee's Alice

"The first idea Jaffe came up with was 'what if the next game was built on Greek mythology?' I thought that was a f***ing great idea because I worked at EA while McGee was working on Alice and I loved the idea of taking something people know, putting a twist on it, and delivering it to a modern audience."

Ken Feldman, art director



Street Fighter 3

"The parrying in God Of War II - the Golden Fleece - that's taken from Street Fighter 3's parry system which is really hardcore and difficult. We opened up the window, made animation and combat changes to make sure those kinds of things are accessible."

Adam Puhl, lead combat designer

previous God Of War I level would fit in the palm of one of the larger Titan's hands. So, huge then. Vassily Filippov, lead game programmer, says that this is only possible because of PS3: "Everything to do with Titan gameplay is only possible because of the power of the SPU processors. It wouldn't be possible without them; we just couldn't pull it off otherwise. The fight in the forest? All of that happening on a moving Titan with hundreds of fully animated trees? No way."

Myths and legends

The shifting, moving terrain of a wandering giant will have drastic effects on gameplay, as Puhl explains, "If you're running down Gaia's shoulder and she puts her arm down, Kratos adjusts for that. He digs his legs in and he's in a wall-climbing state now. Grunts might be falling off if they didn't grab on in time. She can flip her arm back up and then you're in ceiling-climb state. Kratos changes dynamically with the world that's changing around him." Just how much of the game takes place on the Titans and what that involves isn't something the team is ready to discuss. Asmussen drops hints though, mentioning that events take place in Olympus, the heavens, the mortal world and Hades. At one point he even starts, "You're on a Titan, ►

feature

God Of War III

Mount up You can now ride some of the bigger monsters, using them like vehicles to attack their mates.

PS
068



Block buster Using the cyclops' huge club enables Kratos to smash through otherwise unbreakable shields.



With even more enemies to defeat, Kratos' Blades come into their own against the skeletal hordes.

the Titan's crashing through a city..." before finishing with "I don't want to get into specifics of big moments because we've already revealed a lot today." Damn.

Asmussen will at least confirm it's a mutually beneficial relationship between

Puhl also has a suggestion, "Kratos can throw the Cestus heads out and they're like a ball and chain which he can then clap them together to knock everyone out." As well as the new combat tactics Caterson also hints

"This will bring a close to the current GOW series."

Kratos and the Titans, "It gets down to what the motivation is for Kratos and how he's working with this Titan. Maybe the Titan puts Kratos in a certain location where he can do something with his size. Then the Titan does something and they meet up again, but they're always in the frame with each other."

Even without the Titans the scale of the game has been ramped up on every level and you can now expect to battle against hundreds of enemies. According to Caterson this won't just be a case of jacking up the numbers on the screen, "The focus of the large battles is strategy. We've played games and I'll be fighting one guy and it's ⊗, ⊗, ⊙. Then I meet a hundred guys, 'Wow! Oh my God, a hundred guys' but then it's ⊗, ⊗, ⊙ – the only difference is I'm doing it a hundred times. We want to provide a much broader tool set for the player." Like? "The Fire Bow's great. I've got a group of guys – I can set one on fire, grab him, then run into his buddies and each one I hit sets alight as I run through.

there will be other animals and creatures to ride into battle, beyond the cyclops and harpies, "Stig refers to the cyclops as our tanks and the harpies as our helicopters and we've got a few other vehicle analogies in there for a variety of creatures."

Wing and a prayer

The size of the game also introduces one other new feature, the Icarus Assent. Kratos still has his stolen wings from the previous games which he now uses to travel through tunnels and vents in Olympus. In the demo we're shown he hurtles through a narrow passage, dodging beams and debris as he flies. Asmussen explains, "We needed to figure out a way to travel quickly and to cover distance. And we wanted a way to do it that's fun as hell." However, one thing you won't be seeing in God Of War III is any online components. Something producer Hight is specific about, "GOW III is not planned to be an online game. It's telling Kratos' story so we



Defeat a centaur and they'll be gutted. Not 'unhappy'. Literally gutted.

wouldn't add that just to tick a box." So there's *definitely* no online components? "No."

Something the team agree on is that God Of War III is the definitive entry in the series, as summarised by Filippov, "We basically compiled the list of our wishes and 'what if' moments from the previous games and said 'let's do it for real.'" Most importantly, according to Caterson, this will unquestionably bring to a close the current God Of War series, "Our goal is to wrap up the story that we began with God Of War I and continued with God Of War II. We will be finishing that arc."

So will this really be Kratos' final fight? "That particular story arc is part of a much larger universe and a rich tapestry of things that can be tapped into at other times." So potentially we could see stories being told within the God Of War universe that don't star Kratos? "Oh, there are all kinds of possibilities," answers Caterson, smiling. "All kinds of possibilities."

In the mood for...

Traitors

Slapping you on the back before stabbing you in it, these are PlayStation's dirtiest double-crossers

Whether you're being betrayed by a childhood friend, kicked in the face by a fellow free-runner or being left to rot by your boss in a haunted house, betrayal is only ever a cut-scene away on PlayStation. Clues for how to spot an imminent turncoat include anyone who a) gives you a lingering look before leaving the room, b) wears aviator shades, or c) is a woman. Still, when it does all go cello-shaped you can usually put things right with some 9mm shells. Here, then, are the least trustworthy folk we could find. Warning: it's spoiler central

PS
070



Celeste (Mirror's Edge)

Celeste is an expert at death-defying parkour and also re-trains Faith in the art of judo chopping. She's one of your fellow runners and BFF. Things change though, when she joins the fuzz in 'Operation Icarus' – a nefarious plot to contain the flow of information by capturing runners. She escapes before you can get the bitch fight truly on.

intermission

A tasty PlayStation snack



Eva (Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater)

An ex-NSA operative who gains US agent Naked Snake's trust by helping him defeat a rogue Soviet general and avert WW3. She eventually reveals herself as a Chinese double agent, bedding Naked Snake and then sneaking off with the microfilm that leads to a billion-dollar fortune. Not a bad trade, we reckon.



Big Smoke (Grand Theft Auto San Andreas)

The only thing this big-boned gang banger likes more than a bucket of Clucking Bell is a super-sized dollop of deceit. Seemingly CJ's ally in Los Santos, he soon sells him out to main baddie officer Tenpenny to become Grove Street's king of crack. CJ finally kills fat lad in his drug den.



Kor (Jak II: Renegade)

To begin with, Kor is like Obi-Wan: calm, wise, committed. He protects Jak as a child because he's the only one who can gain access to the Precursor Stone, a mysterious artefact (named after an ancient race) that's hidden within a tomb.

Pity he turns out to be an evil Metal Head monster who's hellbent on destroying the Precursor race. Of course he is.



Albert Wesker (Resident Evil)

The boss from hell. Wesker's man management skills appear sound after he helps his fellow STARS members through a zombie-infested mansion. He loses their goodwill, though, when he reveals he's working for the evil Umbrella corp and releases a skewer-limbed bioweapon. For our money, the best mwahing villain ever.



Doctor Judith Mossman (Half-Life 2)

It's always the quiet ones... Except when it's the talkative science types. Judith seems friendly until she sells out the human resistance to side with the evil alien Combine. Her affection for peg-legged physicist Eli Vance sees her ultimately return to the good side and save hero Gordon Freeman in the finale.



Now have your say

Have we forgotten any backstabbers? Email us at opm@futurenet.com and let us know. These are the ones that missed the cut.

■ Kendra Daniels guides you around in *Dead Space* before nicking an escape ship from the alien-infested Ishimura and leaving you for dead.

■ Shadow Of The Colossus' demon Dormin tells you to slay 16 gentle titans, but fails to mention that it's for his own evil gain.

■ Agent 47's contact Diana Burnwood syringes the killer in *Hitman: Blood Money* before coming good and reviving him at his funeral for some shooty good times.

How to GG

be a PS3



Sick of bland walkthroughs and tedious big-head mode cheats? Us too, so we've compiled genuinely useful advice, for the biggest games, from the best players. Read this, go forth, and fear no one...



How to Stay Alive in Resident Evil 5



1 Stick the boot in

The stomp attack - press **Ⓢ** when prompted - finishes off downed Majini with an unceremonious boot to the face/chest. Critically, it means you can prevent them from getting back to their feet and trying to feel Sheva up again, which invariably results in wasted ammo, lost health and cross words. The same goes for the other melee attacks, which are also triggered by on-screen prompts, do serious damage, and can be chained together between Chris and Sheva. To maximise ammo efficiency whenever you see an enemy go down, dash in, stomp, then dash back out.

2 Kit Sheva out correctly

First off, give her *all* the health. She'll make like Florence Nightingale whenever your bar dips below half, and it saves you fumbling around with the inventory screen while a Majini is trying to get off with you. As for weapons, we only let her have the rifle - it's super powerful, and because she's controlled by a *computer*, also super accurate. And with no other guns she's forced to use the rifle at short range. Impractical for a human player. No probs for, just to repeat this, a *computer*. We also give her all the explosives - grenades and mines - to carry around like the reluctant little wife, then request them as needed.

3 Don't double up

Only a fool, or a man with jewels to burn, would upgrade two types of the same weapon. Instead, pick a single weapon from each category (meaning one machine gun, one shotty, and so on) and then methodically upgrade it until the stats are maxed out. Your inventory is cruelly limited, so it's wasteful to double up. For that reason you should always

4 Kill Mr Chainsaw with comfort

Divide and conquer is the key to avoiding a chainsaw massacre, especially in co-op. The bad news is one of you has to stay relatively close to the madman to run interference with the shotgun. (Dash past him, quick turn with **R1** + **ⓧ**, squeeze off a couple of shells, rinse and repeat.) Meanwhile, the other player - the luckier one - retires to a safer distance and takes constant headshots with a scoped rifle. Bam! Who ordered dead man in a sack?

*** Bonus tip**
Don't throw that rotten egg away! (Don't eat it, either, obviously.) You can sell it for a non-stinky 2,000g instead.

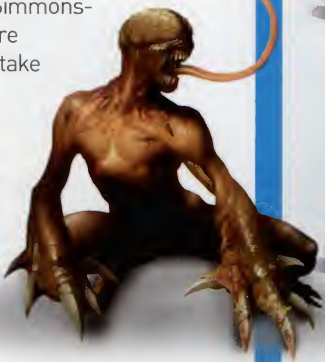
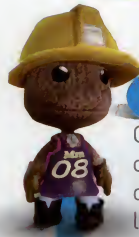
specialise – make Chris the shotgun guy and Sheva the rifle girl, for example – which will avoid both characters needing to use slots for the same type of ammo. It means swapping ammo between the characters as they come across it, but you'll have a more versatile arsenal overall.

5 Lickers love mines

And by 'love' we mean 'absolutely hate'. These Gene Simmons-tongued douches are formidable foes, but you can take advantage of the fact they attack in packs, and crawl forwards relatively slowly, by placing a couple of proximity mines along the route of their approach for cheap instant kills. Oh, and don't forget to Hoover up the valuable Lion Heart jewels left behind.

6 Spend smart

Don't blow your cash on upgrading a new gun just because it's shiny. Different weapons become available at different points, but sometimes it's better to stick with what you've got if it's already upgraded rather than ploughing money into a virgin gun. Check the stats (damage, reload speed, capacity) carefully before deciding. It helps to know which other guns are going to become available. We'd advise waiting for the Dragunov SVD sniper rifle rather than blowing any cash on upgrading the bolt action version found earlier.



How to design Smarter

in LittleBigPlanet

1 Have a plan

Charge off and start building like a firm of Dubai architects and you'll run into all kinds of trouble. You need to pace the action and spread out your hazards. For example, you don't want all your spike pits in the first 30 seconds and none anywhere else. Also, larger traps and challenges need somewhere to hide all the moving parts which could be a problem if your creation is packed into a small area. Even the roughest of plans – sketching on paper helps – makes the work easier to do and more fun to play.

2 Copy everything

The Capture Objects tool in the Tool Bag is your new best friend. You can use it to save enemies, traps, vehicles – anything you can draw a box around. It's important for two reasons. Firstly, you can make copies of things as you build them. That means you always have a previous version to revert to if you screw things up and you can't undo it. Secondly, you can build up a library of mechanisms, switches and machinery to save you making everything from scratch all the livelong day.

3 Freeze and flatten

Tap **↑** to pause and it stops things moving around – this is vital if you don't want objects falling over or motorised things trundling off by themselves. It means everything stays in place as you assemble complicated level sections or build machines. Be careful to unpause every now and then though. If something breaks or glitches it might not show until you unfreeze everything. You can also nip into the in-game pause menu on **START** to flatten the view – it makes everything 2D which is invaluable for precision construction.

4 Know when to use the Grid

In the pause menu you can find an option for a small, medium or large Grid. Selecting one snaps the cursor to a glowing graph paper-like overlay. Anything you construct will now be built to a scale defined by these squares. It's mega-useful for creating machines or precise shapes. The large grid also measures out the distance that a sackboy can easily jump, which is one large square up and three across. This is really handy for making levels fun rather than frustrating. You don't need to use it all the time though, only for areas that require precision and repetition. Simply switch it off and draw freehand when you want to keep things organic.

5 Save the world

Specifically your world. Remember to save your progress at regular intervals. (Like every few minutes.) When we met Dan Leaver, one of Media Molecule's level designers, for a creation master class, he saved after every single change, no matter how small. Thanks to a recent patch you can now also save multiple copies of a level. Do this regularly so that you can backtrack if you screw something up. It's also worth publishing locked versions of your level. No one will be able to play them without a key so it simply enables you to backup your work online, just in case anything untoward happens to your PS3 or hard drive.

How to Redecorate

Sort the wallpaper

Currently the choices are a little limited, and you definitely want to avoid the gaudy retro patterns. Instead go for something classic and austere – a monotone white or, as in our case, slate, to make your apartment feel spacey and neutral. Think Patrick Bateman.

Ditch all the furniture

Particularly the stuff that comes with the standard Harbour Studio. It's gaudy and cheap, darling. Head to the shopping centre and pick up some black designer items to complement your light walls and ceilings – a Yo Yo Table (£1.59 from Ligne Roset), the free Alster Chair, the Summer House apartment sofa. Arrange it looking out over the water.

your apartment in **Home**

Pick a centrepiece

Once the groundwork is laid you'll need something a little special to really put your mark on the room. This is a personal touch, but we recommend the Samurai Sword Rack (£1.59 from the furniture store). It's black to fit with our furniture, and adds a touch of 'oriental elegance' and 'potential madman' to the ensemble.

1 Slate Wallpaper, free 2 Robot Trooper, £0.59 from the furniture store 3 Home Lamp 4 Modern Cabinet, £0.59 from the furniture store 5 Home T-shirt, free from wardrobe 6 Yo Yo Table, design Pagnon & Peha'tre, £1.59 from Ligne Roset 7 Summer House Footstool, £0.79 from furniture store 8 Summer House Sofa, £0.79 from furniture store 9 Summer House Armchair, £0.79 from furniture store.



How to shake off a missile in Warhawk

1 Brake hard

Jam on **(B)** and **(A)** as you fly and you can pull a sharp mid-air handbrake turn. It kills your speed instantly, so bank left and right a few times using **(B)** and **(A)** separately to make a few sharp dodges. That should buy you some time – all you need to do is get the missile to turn sharply in one direction as you pull the handbrake manoeuvre and it should overshoot completely.

2 Use cover

If you hear bleeping, head to the nearest building, mountain or bridge. The distance between bleeps lets you know how much time you've got – the closer together, the nearer to boom time. Steer sharply around the object and you'll be able to get the missile to crash into it. You'll turn faster using the pitch axis, so angle the plane flat against the surface of whatever you're flying around.

3 Crash

You're more likely to walk away from a fight with the ground than with a missile, mainly because after a clang your plane reverts to hover mode. So if you get caught with a missile lock, nosedive to the floor. When you start to hover, land and hit **(A)** to get out and run before your ride explodes. Do it fast and you'll survive even if your kite doesn't.



How to Improve any car in **GT5 Prologue**

1 Do the limbo

The lower a car's chassis is, the lower its centre of gravity, which means it will roll less and the tyres will stay pressed flat to the ground, creating grip. This is why lowering is good (plus, it looks cool). Don't just slam it right to the ground though, especially if you're on a bumpy track. Bottoming the chassis levers the tyres off the ground, meaning you lose grip and control. Lower it until it bottoms, then crank it back up a notch.

2 Tune the gearbox

For some reason, almost every car is geared for more power than it has. Dive into the Quick Tune settings and fix it immediately for extra acceleration – you want to be just banging the rev limiter in top gear at top speed. Aim to get a close spread of gear ratios on the Gear Ratio graph but extend top gear a bit (especially if you're drafting at Daytona). First and second gear should also have bigger gaps and be further apart on the graph than the middle ratios to 1) avoid wheelspin and 2) actually be useful in slow chicanes.

3 Stiffen the suspension

To further help stop the car bottoming and minimise roll, you need to stiffen the suspension. Again, it's a bad idea just to run the adjustments up to maximum, especially on a bumpy circuit. The suspension must be supple enough to track the surface and keep the tyre in contact – the tyre can't grip if it's not on the ground! Harden the springs until the car gets skittery, then back it off a touch.



How to CONQUER

Master League in **PES 2009**

1 **Pick a system and stick to it**

Experienced players will most likely have a preferred formation, but if you're new to the game it's vital to establish a style early on. For instance, we favour Martin O'Neill's patented big man/little man combo up front, supported by super-quick wingers. It's important to decide on your strategy early because you can then plan transfers accordingly, the ultimate aim being to have two good options in each position. Sticking with the same formation also means you develop an innate sense of where each player is likely to be at any point in the game, improving your passing no end.

2 **Buy a superstar on the cheap**

In your first couple of transfer windows almost no one of any quality will agree to come to your comedy club. There is, however, an exception. Due to the lack of the Bundesliga licence, poor old Franck Ribéry hasn't got a club, so throw enough cash at him and he'll sign for you. Most of his stat development is already done, but he's a magnificent dribbler and will boost your championship charge. Just keep him out of the players' lounge, he scares the wives.

3 **Clear out the deadwood**

Go into the 'team information' menu, then 'development sheet', and take a look at the prospective improvement graphs for your players. Any who aren't going to make it – ie develop an average stat score in the 80s – should be used as makeweights in trade deals for more talented men. (If you're using the made-up players rather than a club's real roster, that means pretty much everyone.) Players' stats improve quicker after playing in league games rather than the cups, and also get a bigger boost from a win. For that reason, if you're winning you should always use all three subs to share the stats boost around and avoid star performers getting tired. Bear in mind that subs need at least 20 minutes on the pitch.

4 **Cheat the window**

Even after winning the treble two seasons on the spin it can prove tricky to entice star names. When you get to the main transfer window (not the mid-season one) go to the Options menu, then general settings, and change Master League Level to 'very easy' and Transfer Frequency to 'high'. The players you've saved in your 'scout list' now have a higher percentage chance of joining. Don't make that face, this is a *cheats* guide. (Switch the settings back before starting the next season.)

5 **Rotate constantly**

Provided you have a deep enough squad, you should 'regulate condition' every week. It's under the Team Adjustment menu and usually (but not always) improves the coloured morale arrow of each player which provides a boost to their stats. It will tire them out more quickly, but get the rotation right and you'll be able to only ever pick players who have either an orange or red arrow.





Bonus tip

Set both CBs to go up at corners, then time the cross for just as they arrive in the box. Bang!



Buy young talent

Because players can outperform their growth curves (by playing regularly in a winning team) the best way to build a team of world-beaters is to buy youth with high potential to develop. But without being able to see their growth curves before purchasing, how do you know who to target? By listening to uncle OPM. Note that all the players we've picked range from quick-to-lightning, because speed is the most noticeable stat out on the field.

GOALKEEPER



GK Volkan Pekel

DEFENDERS



SB Nigel De Jong



CB Vincent Kompany



CB Michal Richards



SB Teye Talno

MIDFIELD



RMF Sebastian Giovinco



CMF Alberto Aquilani



AMF Hatem Ben Arfa



LMF David Silva

STRIKERS



CF Sergio Aguero



CF Karim Benzema

SUBS BENCH



CMF Nigel Reo-Coker



SS Alexandre Pato



CF Nicklas Bendtner



SMF Theo Walcott

How to Unlock



secrets in Metal Gear Solid 4



Psyche gauge taken a big hit? Simply hammer quickly to replenish it.

If you set the date on your PS3 so it's either a Wednesday or a Sunday, Drebin's prices will be lower.

Enter 14893 in Otacon's office at Shadow Moses to get 100,000 Drebin Points.

While fighting the human (ie supermodel) second form of any member of the Beauty And The Beast Unit, keep them at bay for three minutes. Do this to be transported to a blank world where your adversary will pose while you take photographs. "Give me shattered by the horror of war, baby."



Music matters

The track Beyond The Bounds increases Snake's stun damage with non-lethal weaponry. Find it by restoring the power to the Shadow Moses Tank Hangar and explore all rooms on the upper gantry.

The track Opening: Old L.A. 2040 increase's Snake's accuracy. Find it by inputting code 78925 into the computer in Otacon's office at Shadow Moses.

The track Policenaughts Ending causes soldiers to fall asleep as soon as Snake touches them. Find it by inputting the code 13462 into the computer in Otacon's office at Shadow Moses.

The track Sailor increases the amount of life Snake recovers from rations and other items. Find it between the east wall and a shipping container at the South American Vista Mansion.



Rare weapons

Solar Gun To get this cool solar-powered ray gun, collect five statues - four of the B&B Unit beauties and the fifth of the Haven Trooper (they appear after you defeat each enemy using the tranq gun). Their locations are...

Haven Trooper statue In the garage at the end of the battle.

Laughing Octopus statue On a bed in the lab where you fight her.

Raging Raven statue On the uppermost floor of the tower.

Crying Wolf statue Inside building near the start of the boss battle.

Screaming Mantis statue In the corridor where you started the boss battle

The Tanegashima To buy this ancient-looking rifle, which creates deadly tornadoes, 'simply' save up 1,000,000 Drebin Points.

Emotion ammo Make your enemies rage, cry, scream or laugh with very special tranquilliser ammo. The price? Just finishing MGS4 once.

Finished? Think again

Save and head to Extras in the main menu. Enter the following passwords then start a new game. The unlocked items will be waiting with the Metal Gear Mk.II.

aottrykmyn Unlocks the Altair costume from Assassin's Creed.

dntkkhktmm Unlocks the Drebin face camo.

jmsotsynrn Unlocks the Type 17 pistol.

mekakorkkk Unlocks the SOCOM pistol from MGS.

mnsoymsyhn Unlocks the Mosin Nagant sniper rifle.

laytmymhkh Unlocks the 1911 Pistol.

pkhnnwhsjt Unlocks The Boss' Patriot gun.

skynytktjp Unlocks the Scanning Plug (hacks enemy nanomachine network to reveal their locations through walls).

deskyhstyl Unlocks the Desert Eagle Long Barrel pistol.


tshsniammr Unlocks the ultra powerful Thor .45-70.

How to find Secret equipment in **Fallout 3**

* **Bonus tip**

Save bobby pins when lock-picking by quitting out after the first two attempts and retrying. It'll stop them breaking.

1 **Harness alien technology**




Get a big advantage early on by grabbing the super-powerful Alien Blaster – the only work you have to do is walking. It's lying about in the Wastelands, so there's no lock-picking or questing required. Just head north from Minefield and keep going until your Pip-Boy picks up a signal full of crackling static and strange sounds. West of the Greener Pastures Disposal Site you'll find the wreckage of a crashed UFO. There, among the remnants of the craft, you'll find the body of an extraterrestrial and his extremely mighty gun. Note: use it sparingly because there's no extra ammo.

2 **Dress to impress**




Nothing says 'trust me' like a leopard-print nightie. Finding the Naughty Nightwear will give you +10 speech which will make it much easier to lie, barter or coerce anyone you meet. To get it you need to look for Grady, a corpse in Marigold metro station's booth. He has a holotape nearby, recording his last words, which leads you to a key, then a safe. Open that baby up and claim your sexy prize.

3 **Powering up**



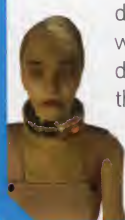
You get some decent Power Armour (and the training to use it) as soon as you start hanging out with the Brotherhood Of Steel, but the kit you really want is the T-51b version. To get it you need to go and see Mister Crowley in the Ghoulish city of Underworld, and take the You Gotta Shoot 'Em In The Head quest. Once you've carried out his contract kills and collected the keys from your victims, hand them over to Crowley. The easiest way to get the armour (killing Crowley will turn the Underworld residents against you) is to pickpocket the keys back from Crowley before he leaves the museum. Then you can head to Fort Constantine, and grab the suit for yourself.

4 **Scheming for success**

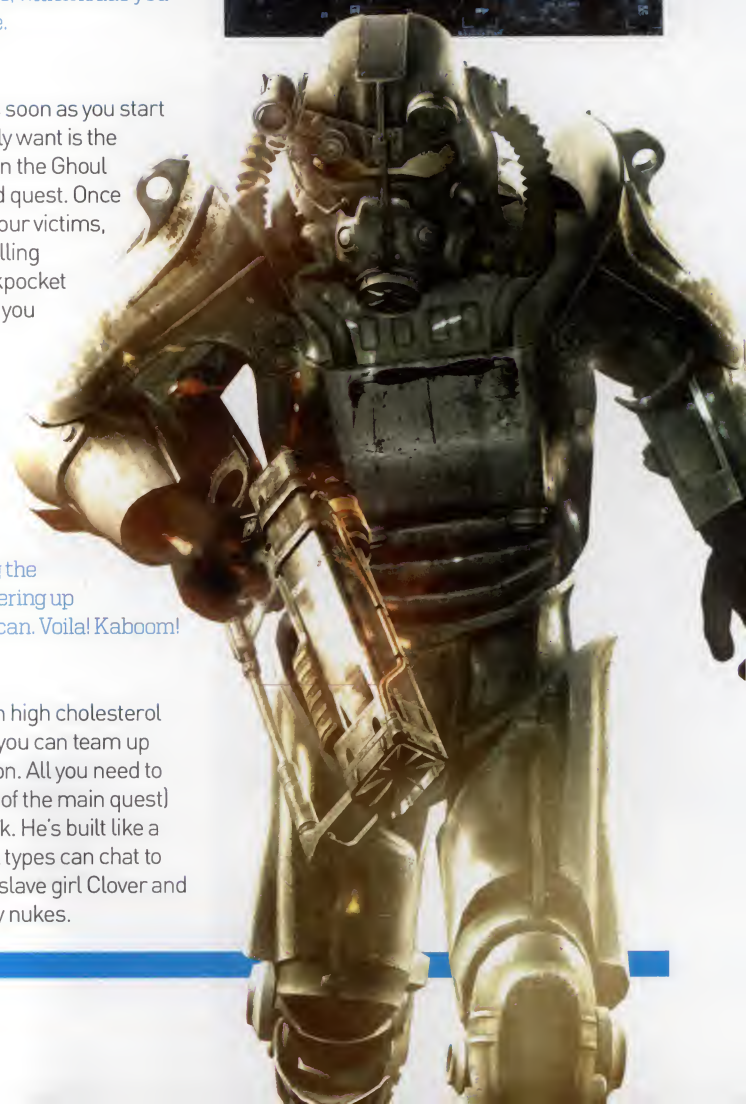


Why spend your cash on weak-assed frag grenades when you can build far more effective Nuka Grenades from household items? You need the schematic which can be found either in Yao Guai Cave through Cliffside Caverns (not recommended unless you have the beast-taming Animal Friend perk), bought from travelling trader Doc Hoff or grabbed for free by completing the Nuka-Cola Challenge at Girdershade. Then it's just a case of gathering up some Nuka Cola Quantum, Abraxo cleaner, turpentine and a tin can. Voila! Kaboom!

5 **Making friends**



Just because Dogmeat kicks the bucket faster than a mayfly with high cholesterol doesn't mean every companion is useless. If you're a do-gooder you can team up with Fawkes, the super mutant with the manners of an Oxford don. All you need to do is free him from his prison inside Vault 87 (you'll find it as part of the main quest) then recruit him when you meet again at Enclave HQ, Raven Rock. He's built like a tank and equipped with a Gatling Laser. Company-craving evil types can chat to Eulogy Jones in Paradise Falls, and purchase the services of slave girl Clover and her infinite ammo shotgun. Just don't leave her alone with any nukes.



How to Take the gimmie out of **Skate 2**

Get Tricky

Never underestimate the importance of throwing in flips between any trick and linking moves together with more moves. Even a humble 180 Ollie will boost your score. It's especially important when grinding. Always slip a rotating flip trick in as you enter and leave a grind to squeeze points out of the smallest run.

2 Milk the man

Sure, Skate 2 is about rep and getting the most prestige from your peers, but most importantly it's about making money to buy all the best stuff. Whenever you get a new board sponsor, *always* make sure you use one of their decks as it'll massively increase the amount of cash you get for completing a challenge.

3 Abuse the rules

Because of Skate 2's realistic physics you can con the game into giving you a little more oomph. Whenever you're about to hit a ramp or jump out of a grind hit **RT** or **LT** briefly. It'll trick the game into thinking you're about to grab the board and the slight shift in body position will add a few valuable inches of height to the air you get.

How to score

1.5 million points

in **Pain**

* Bonus tip

When in the Amusement Park, rack up points by aiming for a giant ceiling fan and clinging on as long as possible.

1 To the Hotel!

Catapult yourself on full power towards (and over) the 'L' sign on the hotel. Hitting the left-hand side of the white explosive tank on its roof will send you hurtling towards the giant bowling ball. Grab the ball until it rolls off its slide, at which point let go and aim for the explosive crate under the scaffolding opposite.

2 Ready to vent

The momentum of the crate should propel you into the entrance of the underground station - take out the granny and Ooch down the stairs. Near the bottom, shake the pad to activate fiery Ooch, and use this to sling yourself over the track, through the stack of boxes, and into the rectangular air vent on the wall of the opposite platform.

3 Crash the party

The vent will throw you into the sky - as you come down, simply aim yourself towards the nearest explosive crate to keep moving. From here your objective is to stop on a road and allow traffic to continually run you over - use the overhead view (hold **LB**) to ensure that you direct yourself towards a different vehicle each time you're hit.



How to upgrade your kit early in **Dead Space**

Struggling with tentacle amputation? Use these codes to buy weapon and suit upgrades early. Note that the cash and power nodes cheats only work once, but the oxygen/stasis recharges are unlimited. Press pause at any point and hit the following buttons...

▲□▲□□▲□□▲□□▲ five nodes

□▲▲▲▲□□▲ 10,000 credits

□□□▲▲ 2,000 credits

□□▲▲▲ refill oxygen

▲□□□▲ two nodes

□□□▲□▲ 5,000 credits

□□□▲□ 1,000 credits

▲□□▲▲□▲ refill stasis/kinesis





Bonus tip

Practice using both your index and middle fingers on the pad's face buttons as it'll make moves easier to pull off.

El Fuerte

When fighting with Fuerte, you've got to knock your opponent down and keep them down. The key is to keep them guessing which move you're going to try when they get up. Try the Body Splash (medium punch) or the Flying Throw (hard punch) to take them down if they block. Another trick is landing the Giga Buster (Fuerte's Ultra) – which is unblockable but easy to dodge. Goad your opponent into jumping and activate the move while they're in the air – it'll catch them as soon as they land.

C Viper

Viper is the queen of the cross-up – such as the Burning Kick (D, DB, B+K) that hits her opponent on the side they're not expecting and forces them to push forward counter-intuitively to block. It's a move that's safe from most counter attacks – launch it against cautious opponents and watch them cower. The Thunder Knuckle (D, DF, F+P) is another smart move against blocks as it hits high or low depending on the punch you use.

Rufus

Pay no attention to the giant, pendulous belly – Rufus is one of the fastest characters in the game. The Galactic Tornado (D, DF, F+P) looks ridiculous but is an excellent move for putting the pressure on – it sucks up fireballs, it's fairly safe from counter attacks, and the EX version will actually drag opponents towards you. For an easy, safe combo, try doing an Aerial Dive Kick (D, DB, B+K) into a medium punch, then follow up with the Tornado. Lovely.

Seth

Beating new boss Seth isn't easy – the trick to defeating him is constant movement. If you stand still, he'll suck you in, pepper you with Sonic Booms or teleport next to you for a cheap Spinning Piledriver. Bounce around, pick your shots and wait until he tries his multi-teleport – then throw out an

EX or Ultra combo. Once his Ultra's built up, beware – the only way to avoid it is to jump away the instant he goes for the move.

Abel

Confusion is key. His best move is the quick combo (F, DF, F+P), but only if you vary the second and third moves (P for a punch, K for a low blow and throw). You can mix things up by throwing in a Marseilles Roll (D, DF, F+K) to get past your opponent. And what's the use of the Sky Fall throw (F, D, DF+P) without an easy way to set it up? Just press D+HP to launch your opponent in the air for an easy combo.

How to

Master

the new characters in **SFIV**

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Combining style with the latest technology, the Mad Catz Bluetooth Headset for PS3 enables convenient hands-free communication. The compact, lightweight design ensures comfortable use in either ear while the noise-reducing, echo-eliminating mic maintains crystal-clear sound quality throughout all your online gaming sessions.

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✓ Hero Matt Hazard has been around since the 8-bit days.



Win a PS3 with Matt Hazard

...and a copy of comedy shooter Eat Lead

Fancy a side of laughs with your action? Then new shooter Eat Lead: The Return Of Matt Hazard is for you. It's got the guns and the gadgets, and a wisecracking hero who's seen it all before. Matt Hazard is a videogame megastar, but his latest game, Eat Lead, is actually a fiendish trap, and its nefarious creator doesn't want him to make it out alive. With his foe hacking in new enemies to try and assassinate him at every turn, Hazard has to blast his way through gangs of space marines, cowboys and zombies, all while figuring out who wants him dead.

As well as Hazard's quips there are parodies of your favourite games, like Captain Carpenter, the workman with a fear of mushrooms, and Japanese RPG characters who can only speak in text boxes. Even better, US comedian Will Arnett provides Matt's gruff voice, while Neil Patrick Harris (still Dr Doogie Howser to us) supplies the voice of the villain. Eat Lead: The Return of Matt Hazard is hoping to put the laughter back into videogame slaughter.

To be in with a chance of getting your hands on a copy of Eat Lead: The Return Of Matt Hazard and a PS3 to play it on, all you have to do is correctly answer the following question:



PS3
085

Who does Eat Lead star Will Arnett play in US TV series Arrested Development?

A BYRON 'BUSTER' BLUTH

B GEORGE OSCAR BLUTH II

C BARRY ZUCKERKORN

Text using the word 'Lead' followed by a space, then your answer A, B or C followed by a space, then your name and address to 87474. Or enter at futurecomps.co.uk/lead. Winners will be picked at random from all correct entries. Closing date 14.04.2009

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Hideo Kojima's Blu-ray collection

Movies that made MGS

Talent borrows, genius steals – and by his own admission Metal Gear Solid creator Hideo Kojima has stolen a lot. Laid out here are the films that guided him through the MGS series, from John Carpenter's hero-inspiring *Escape From New York* to the gritty *Bourne Trilogy*. Want to go fully balls-deep in MGS lore? Get 'em all on Blu-ray.



Monkeys are broadly against nuclear arms.

Espionage

Goldfinger

Kojima's favourite of all the Bond series. "Without 007, there would have been no MGS," Kojima explains. "Being caught once then escaping is essential to both MGS and 007," he says, as it "allows the creator to portray the relationship between the spy and the boss."

Sci-fi

Planet Of The Apes

Kojima describes *Planet Of The Apes* as the movie which gave him the courage to make a game specifically critical of nuclear proliferation. "As a citizen of the only country in the world in which the atomic bomb was used, I was strongly influenced by Apes' anti-nuke message," he says. It goes without saying that he's a big fan of monkeys too.

Sci-fi

2001: A Space Odyssey

Stanley Kubrick's cerebral epic is Kojima's favourite film of all, as it "goes beyond sci-fi to become philosophy". The real names of two central MGS characters – Solid Snake and Otacon – come from the film: David and Hal.



What are you doing, Dave? 2001's computer and astronaut hero are referenced by MGS.

War

The Deer Hunter

According to Kojima, Snake's headband isn't a reference to his namesake Plisskin, but a nod to Bob De Niro's ice-cold 'Nam vet in *The Deer Hunter*. Available on Blu-ray in Australia.



That headband? Nabbed from De Niro, not Plisskin, according to Kojima.



Action

Die Hard

The lethal game of hide and seek played by wisecracking New York cop John McClane through the air vents, fire escapes and elevator shafts of the terrorist-occupied Nakatomi Plaza was one of Kojima's key inspirations while he was converting the old, 2D Metal Gear series into the fully 3D Metal Gear Solid.



Bourne: an influence on MGS4's chase scenes.

Espionage

The Bourne Trilogy

Kojima admires Bourne's stern action scenes, which he calls a "return to the roots of espionage action movies". He also praises the car chases, which he says informed his work in MGS4.



Action

Full Metal Jacket

Kubrick again. As well as the powerful anti-war message, the film's tortuous, climactic sniper battle - and the revelation that Matthew Modine and his fellow Marines have been facing down a female sharpshooter all along - was the key inspiration behind Sniper Wolf in the first Metal Gear Solid.



▲ Sexy marks lady: nabbed from Full Metal Jacket.

Horror

Dawn Of The Dead

The shopping mall-set peak of George A Romero's zombie trilogy (we're not counting the new ones) gave Kojima ideas for the level design of his series. "The gameplay of MGS, involving a closed 3D maze composed of air ducts and elevators, is straight out of Dawn Of The Dead," he explains. The Blu-ray is currently available in the US only, but is region-free.



▲ The boxy, maze-like design of the PS1 MGS titles is taken from Dawn Of The Dead.



▲ Constant war: the glum feel of Children Of Men.



Dystopia

Children Of Men

Kojima was impressed by the long, single-take handheld shots and low-key CG effects which gave Alfonso Cuarón's dystopian future its documentary feel. He worked hard to make sure the same constant "war become routine" feel permeated MGS4. The Blu-ray is available from the US only, but isn't region-locked.

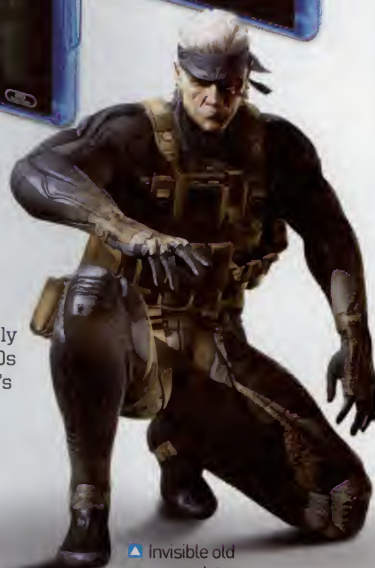
Action

Predator

Kojima used a stealthy jungle setting for MGS3, but what really caught his eye in the classic '80s action horror was the Predator's invisibility trick. The special effects behind the alien super-hunter's cloaking ability were the primary influence on MGS3's woodland camouflage and, more obviously, MGS4's chameleon-like Octocamo.



▲ Kojima is big on '80s action heroes, and they don't come any bigger than Arnie.



▲ Invisible old men: predatory.

Sci-fi

Escape From New York

John Carpenter's genre classic is the "film that influenced me the most in the birth of MGS hero Solid Snake", Kojima tells us. "His words and actions, and every move, looked so cool." So cool that Kojima took the name, the eyepatch and the attitude to make his own hero.

War

Black Hawk Down

Kojima was impressed by the bleak sun and sand feel to the lighting and photography in Ridley Scott's controversial Delta Force nightmare. So much so that he travelled to the original set locations in Morocco to research the environments for the opening section of MGS4.



▲ Josh Hartnett in the prettily-photographed Black Hawk Down.

Next month in...

PlayStation®

Official Magazine - UK

On sale
14 April
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84

PS
088

Bioshock 2

A rapturous return?

Content subject to change

The
OPM review
setup



Our review code is tested on hi-def and standard-def TVs to ensure we know how games perform at both ends of the scale. Our HD setup is a 70" Sony Bravia with Dolby Digital 5.1 surround sound.

PlayStation®
Official Magazine - UK

Reviews

Your essential guide to every new release

You could argue this is a slow month for reviews, except for the fact that the first one is Tom Clancy's HAWX, which involves very fast planes. It's almost really good, but then isn't, for reasons you can discover over the page (cough fly through the trees cough).

Other games reviewed that include things going fast: Burnout Paradise: The Ultimate Box, a snazzy repackaging of the original must-have racer with all the online content to date; OutRun Online Arcade, a downsized but still shiny PSN version of the Sega classic; and 50 Cent: Blood On The Sand, which provoked the biggest OMFG! ever in the OPM office when it was announced, but – shockingly – isn't a big bag of balls.

We've also got shonky exploitation shooters Shellshock 2 and Destroy All Humans – both of which are a massive bag of balls – and another example of why PSN is so excellent in the brilliantly fun 3-On-3 NHL Arcade. Seriously, download it. Now. Oh, okay, read the review first.



90

TOM CLANCY'S HAWX

Flying around the skies so fast you don't ever really get to see the stuff you're shooting at. Yay the future! Wait, I've hit something... was that a golden eagle?



94

BURNOUT PARADISE: THE ULTIMATE BOX

Bikes, night-time, a party mode – it's like Halfords on New Year's Eve. Except it's a brilliant racing game, not a tenuous simile.



104

3-ON-3 NHL ARCADE

The best fun we had all month. Plays like the classic NHL hits of the mid-'90s, looks like a terrifying parallel universe populated by rock hard Canadian midgets.

How we score our reviews...

10 Essential

Instant classic that's as close as it gets to PlayStation perfection.

9 Outstanding

Highly recommended, and an investment you won't regret.

8 Very good

Mostly excellent, but held back by one or two minor flaws.

7 Good

Enjoyable, but with definite room for improvement. Rent it first.

6 Reasonable

A decent offering, but one that only satisfies in places.

5 Average

A game that is both fun and frustrating in equal measure.

4 Below average

Too flawed to be anything more than a brief curiosity.

3 Poor

A seriously flawed game with no long-term appeal.

2 Awful

A disgrace to the bargain bin. Avoid it as you would a bullet.

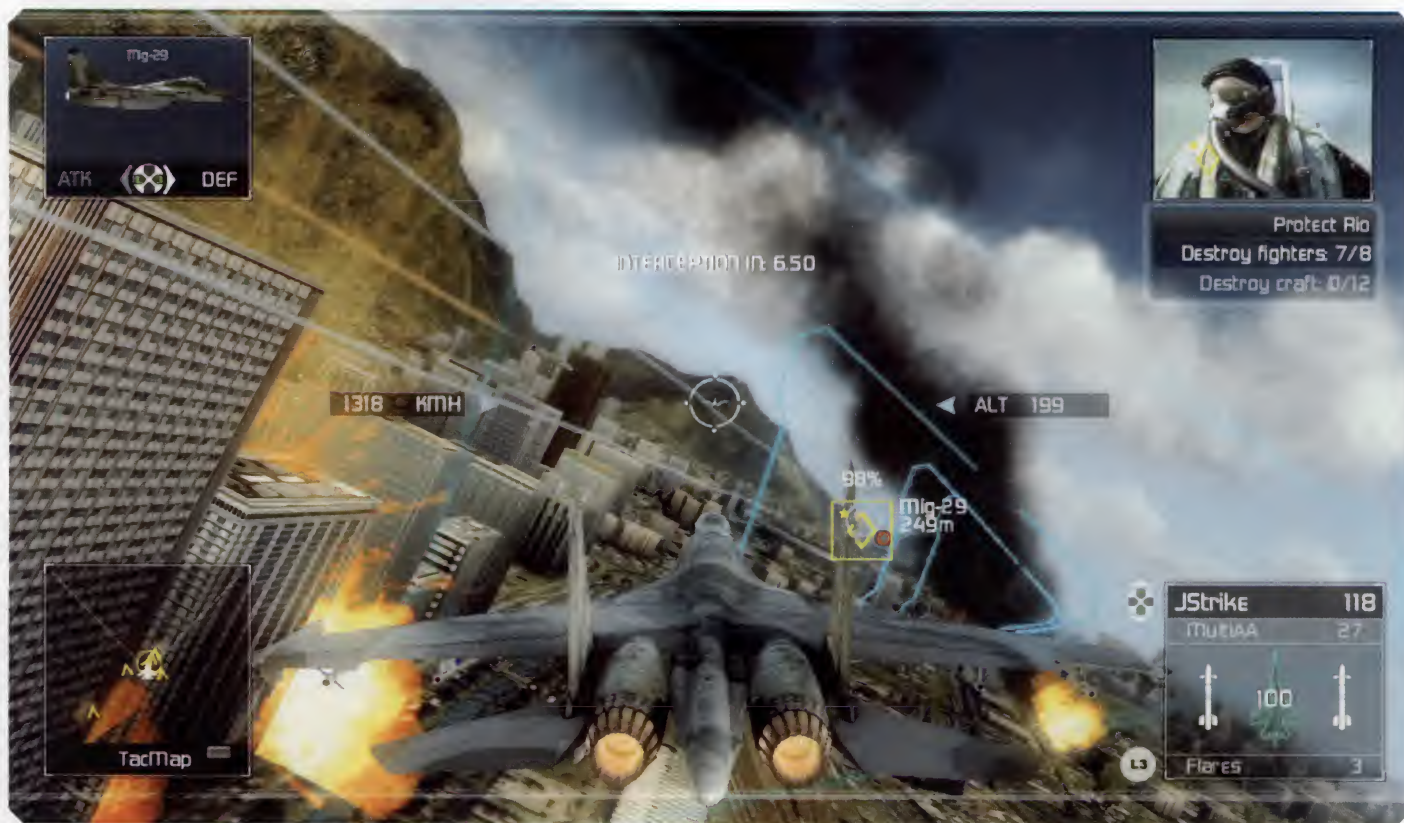
1 Horrific

Buy this shocker and watch your console self-combust in protest.

**GOLD
AWARD**
PlayStation®
Official Magazine - UK

Our highest accolade

The gold award is presented to any game that we feel demonstrates significant innovation, near flawless gameplay, great graphics and profound appeal.



Engine failure

Tom Clancy's HAWX

Stunt flying not enough to take our breath away



Info

Format PS3 ETA Out now Pub
Ubisoft Dev Ubisoft Romania Players
1-8 Web hawxgame.com It's like
Going to war with the yellow paint
markings on a children's playground.

Hold up a second, when the hell did this happen? When did the flash, jumpsuited world of aerial combat stop being about lighting up 'bogeys' with white-hot streams of machine gun fire and start being about staring at little yellow boxes with winged black dots in the middle and waiting for them to go red? Where's the romance, the honour, the other planes? Like copyright law and basic human interaction, shooting at each other in the sky has been ruined by the relentless march of technology.

Well, slightly ruined, anyway. Yes, the planes go so fast that dogfighting in the traditional sense is dead and you can't even see what you're shooting at. And yes the proliferation of targeting aids and electronic guidance systems makes it

feel a lot like your plane is secretly doing all the fighting and calling you an idiot behind your back. But there's still some fun to be wrangled out of HAWX, mostly in the form of military tech-lust.

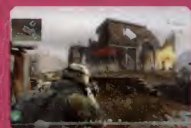
Occupying the same half-sim, half-arcade space as the Ghost Recon series – it'll never be fun like a balls-out shooter, but if you get off on state-of-the-art hardware, it's like walking into the Playboy mansion on baby oil night.

Stay on target

The story has you switching from a special US Air Force team (the High Altitude Warfare Experimental squadron,

which gives the game its edgy-like-a-dad-in-a-hooded-top name) to Artemis, a rich and powerful private military company. But whichever side you're on, the actual fighting remains the same. There are three main types of mission – defend, attack and escort. All of them involve fighting waves of enemy ground and air units, but the emphasis is a little different for each. Defence missions feel the most like thankless busywork, as you shuttle from one side of the map to the other dispatching planes, choppers and tanks as fast as possible to avoid getting overrun (incredibly, if you leave the 'combat area' you're given a few seconds

Influences In the engine room of Clancy's future flyer



Ghost Recon



Ace Combat



Stealth



The Discovery Channel



CHiPs



▲ The big happy blue triangles lead you towards your target. The red ones are bad and mean 'run'.



▲ Get close to the ground and the textures on the mirage-like trees are surprisingly weak.



▲ Bombing raids and attack runs provide the game's best moments by far.

to right yourself before you're blown up, rather than being auto-piloted back into the zone). Attack missions are the most fun – usually set to a time limit, they involve swooping down on fixed positions losing bombs and missiles. And escorts are the hardest and most frustrating. If defending is like putting out fires, escort missions are like putting out fires which move at several hundred miles an hour while someone shoots electronically guided surface-to-air missiles at you.

Safety off

The flying itself is the biggest draw. The realism bar is set just high enough that it takes a few missions to get used to the tilt and turn dynamics, but when you do there's a nice payoff to the stern handling. When you're in the thick of a busy combat zone, slowing for tight turns, extending a run on a target for as long as possible before breaking off and swerving violently to avoid missiles, the game is at its best.

The problem is that these things – the things HAWX does well – it shares with most flying games, but its biggest flaws are its own. You can give orders to your



ScorePole

HAWX is comparable to the so-so Blazing Angels 2, but Warhawk is still the system's ace pilot.



2up

second opinion

Name Tim Clark
Angle The adorable wingman

"The funniest moment of the month was swooping down in HAWX to discover that you can fly *through* the rubbish pixelated trees. And that's the game all over: it's beautiful and ugly, exciting and boring, sometimes all in the space of one mission. The trick flying is an interesting, arguably brave, idea – but it proves too confusing to build a whole game around. I can't see HAWX being a big part of the Clancyverse."

Best for...
Recovering Ace Combat addicts

wingmen (if the mission gives you any), but the options are horribly limited. You can't give them individual commands, for instance, and the only thing you *can* do is tell them to attack or defend your current target by pressing left or right on the D-pad. This means turning to look at whatever it is you want them to deal with, and when you're racing across the combat zone to take out a raiding squad of MiGs, slowing to point out targets for your little helpers is absolutely not standard operating procedure.

Flight assistant

Just as baffling are the flight assists. Together they're called ERS – Enhanced Reality System – and cover everything from the boxy targeting aids to coloured flight paths that lead towards enemy targets or away from enemy

missiles. The baffling thing is that the HUD prompts are largely the same as in most other air combat games, so it's weird that HAWX gives them a jazzy name and makes a big fuss. At least it is for the first few missions, until it turns out that they've only been making a big deal about ERS so they can make an even bigger deal about you turning it off.

The idea is that by introducing an element of danger – turn too tightly without ERS and your plane stalls and starts dropping – the game can reward you for skilfully flying right up to the limits of what your craft can handle. But it doesn't work, partly because stalling isn't very dangerous (pull up and accelerate with **L2** and you're right again in seconds) and because with ERS off, the view pulls out to a locked and weirdly distant third-person perspective. Twist and turn and the plane moves rather than the screen, presumably to make it easier to avoid threats and line up targets. But working out which way you have to move the stick to make the plane go where you want is a frustrating pain, and damns the whole idea to failure.

And that's the whole game – solid flying, familiar mission structure and some new ideas that don't work out. There are online co-op and competitive modes that we haven't been able to try

yet, which could potentially make a difference – fighting against humans is always tougher and more fun than anything the game can throw at you – but as a single-player experience, HAWX ditches in the drink. **Nathan Ditum**



▲ The 'flight aids off' mode is hard to control and puts your plane miles away.





▲ Walking gun turret! Thank god for the giant orange weak spot on its arse.



▲ Luv a duck, hark at the ruddy dialogue – it's like Guy Ritchie doing On The bleeding Buses.



▲ As long as you've got at least one working finger, the aim assist makes killing a doddle.

Resistance Retribution

Cor blimey guv', bloody great aliens!

Remember the good old days when it was still okay to call the French frogs? Resistance: Retribution does, apparently, and despite thumb-straining controls and a Carry On-style script, it's *still* the best PSP game since Chains Of Olympus.

The year is 1951 – sandwiched between Resistance Fall Of Man and Resistance 2 – and you play grumpy cockney James Grayson. You've deserted the British army to smash up Chimeran conversion centres (the factories the invaders use to turn humans all six-eyed and nasty). This has brought you to the attention of surly French resistance types, the Maquis, who you've teamed up with to turf the aliens off European soil.

But before you can start shooting any hybrids, you'll need to battle the controls. Attempting to solve the now familiar

Info



Format PSP ETA 20 Mar Pub Sony Dev SCEA Bend Studio Players 1-8 Web snipurl.com/c6smc It's like Hunting for aliens with Dick Van Dyke.

one-stick PSP shooter problem, Retribution subs in the face buttons for the second stick. It never feels smooth, and to compensate, the aim assist has been overpowered – hold down **LB** to fire and the game auto-locks to whoever you're vaguely looking at. This means that even the most frenzied battles become exercises in selecting targets and not getting shot, rather than a test of skill.

Aiming low

You *can* use the manual aiming, but it's clunky at the best of times, and when you're battling enemies with a specific weak spot, such as Boilers (lady aliens whose heads explode if you get too close), all but impossible. Alternatively you can link your PSP to your PS3 and use a Sixaxis, which solves the problem, as long as you only want to play the game in your house within wire's reach of your PS3 and instead of Resistance 2. Thought not.

Bad at that sounds, it's the game's only big flaw, and there are plenty of pluses. To balance the fact the shooting is slightly numb, there's an idiot-proof

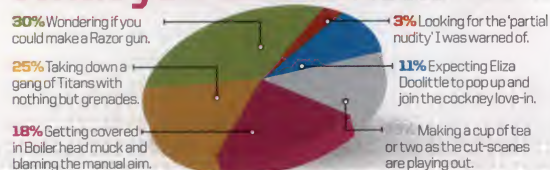
snap-to-cover system which kicks in whenever you're near to a low wall or doorway. It's simple, and gives an extra depth to the crucial 'not getting shot' stuff. And developer Bend has also rectified one of our biggest complaints with the PS3 games – not only can Grayson swim, he can also do underwater puzzles (mostly simple switch and lever stuff) and fight off confusing mermaid Chimera ladies called Sirens, which is a big advance over the instant-death nonsense of the Furies in Resistance 2.

If you have a copy of Resistance 2 and a PS3 handy, you can even hook up your PSP and try out Infected mode. It gives Grayson that Hepatitis golden-eye glow, changes some cut-scenes and, crucially, gets you regenerating health and a magnum with exploding bullets. Not life changing stuff, especially as it

disappears once you turn your PSP off, but it definitely adds replayability. With so much to see here and even more to shoot, there's zero chance of anyone with a trigger finger getting bored.

Rachel Penny

What you do in... Resistance



▼ Use the focus attacks to slice men in two. "It's just a flesh wound!"



Big-haired hero

Afro Samurai

Don't play it again, Sam

The best thing to be said for Afro Samurai is that at least it knows who to steal from. In less time than it takes for the first severed head to hit the floor, you'll have racked up a long list of the similarities between this game and Ninja Gaiden. The fighting system uses almost the exact same mix of vertical slices, horizontal slashes, kicks and jumps – and there's also no mistaking Afro's lean-into-the-wind running style or, less cheerily, the manual camera system, which requires constant babysitting if you want a clear view of the men trying to stab you up. Which, fairly obviously, you do.

Still, nobody does the hacky, slashy

Info



Format PS3 ETA
Out now **Pub** Atari
Dev Namco Bandai
Players 1 **Web**
bloodisbeautiful.
com *It's like Being*
Jimi Hendrix with a
katana, in theory.

feudal Japan stuff better than Ninja Gaiden, so Afro is off to a decent start, and even manages to add a twist of its own in the form of focus attacks. Your focus gauge builds as you perform combos. Focus is then activated by pressing **[L]**, which drops the game into monochromatic slo-mo. Now hold **[A]** or **[B]** and a twinkle of light travels along the length of Afro's sword. Wait until it gets to the tip, release, and you'll bisect the nearest enemy in a geyser of arterial blood. Okay, it's not like any of us haven't bisected a man in a geyser of arterial blood before, but the focus attacks are a pleasure to use because they're snappy enough to blend with the basic combos, and also add a satisfying risk/reward element to the swordplay in the sense that charging up while being attacked is a gamble.

Furious vengeance, etc

The other thing in Afro's favour is the violent, funny source material. Based on the cartoon that's broadcast over here on stoner favourite Adult Swim, the game also features the voice of Samuel L. Jackson as Afro's ghostly alter ego



▲ Your white-haired alter ego, Ninja Ninja, will pop up to run his mouth and give directions.



▲ "Well, this is awkward, ladies, but the game insists I attack you with a samurai sword..."



Ninja Ninja, and has a soundtrack supplied by Wu Tang overlord RZA. But despite some decent fundamentals, Afro quickly stalls. There's just no variation. No magic orbs to collect. No new weapons to acquire. Just endless waves of enemies to dice using the same few techniques, interspersed with some undercooked puzzley bits. And the sheer blandness of the cel-shaded environments makes going around in circles a regular annoyance. Ninja Ninja acts as your sat nav, popping up in a puff of smoke to show you the way when summoned, but the idiot camera often means he pops up entirely off-screen. And then insults you.

Even the core combat pales after a bit, because it lacks the exacting precision of Gaiden. Also, mapping the evasive roll to three buttons makes it a pig to pull off when surrounded, leaving you to get bogged down by sheer weight of

numbers. As licensed games go this isn't a disgrace, but compared to the best the genre has to offer it falls well short. Ignore unless you're some kind of Afro Samurai superfan. Which you almost certainly aren't. **Tim Clark**

Afro-o-Meter

Just how huge is his hair?



PlayStation®
Official Magazine - UK

5

❑ Bikes are brilliant for going really fast over jumps, but bad for survival.



Paradise regained

Burnout Paradise The Ultimate Box

Now with greener grass and prettier girls

Burnout Paradise took the number six spot in our reader-voted 2008 Game Of The Year. Six! Above Resistance 2, Bioshock, Mirror's Edge and Dead Space. Sure, Criterion's mentalist racer came highly recommended at the time, but so had at least a dozen other games throughout the year that had fallen out of public favour come voting time. What kept Burnout fresh was the unprecedented level of support it received from Criterion after its initial release – not just glitch-fix patches but big new drops of free game.

One careful owner

And what we have here is all of those extra bits gathered together, in addition to the first piece of 'premium' content (read 'paid for' – you didn't think EA would let one of its top studios give away dreams and doughnuts forever, did you?). Trophies are welcome, if a little easily earned ('You turned a corner!'), and follow the existing 'Burnout Achievements' exactly. Being able to make your own pounding, go-faster custom soundtrack is a big win though, and there's a magic to competitive events

Trophies



Platinum
For all the original game's trophies



100% Bike
Gold, for racing the bike licence.



Class A
Silver, for the Class A licence.

when a rousing track kicks in. The weather basically consists of superficial shifts in fog and sun (rain would presumably mean fundamental changes to vehicle handling), unlike the day/night cycle, which totally changes the feel of racing and introduces some lovely headlamps-on-asphalt effects. And Party Pack, available to buy on the Store, is a pass-the-pad multiplayer mode where up to eight players try to match each other in skill, stunt and speed rounds. It's a bit like Skate's SKATE mode – fun, but not as good as racing.

The best of the new changes is the addition of motorbikes. This is a first for Burnout, and they feel totally different to the existing line-up of cars. Mostly this is because they're suicidally fast and lean precariously into turns (the first-person view is brilliant and terrifying). But their implementation feels incomplete – there's no ragdoll rider skidding away from the wreck when you crash (he disappears, eerily, a millisecond before wipeout), there's no boost,



▲ 'Dynamic weather' means 'sudden pea souper'.



▲ The new sunsets rival those in Midnight Club LA.



▲ Lonely road: offline, there are no AI bikes to race.



Info

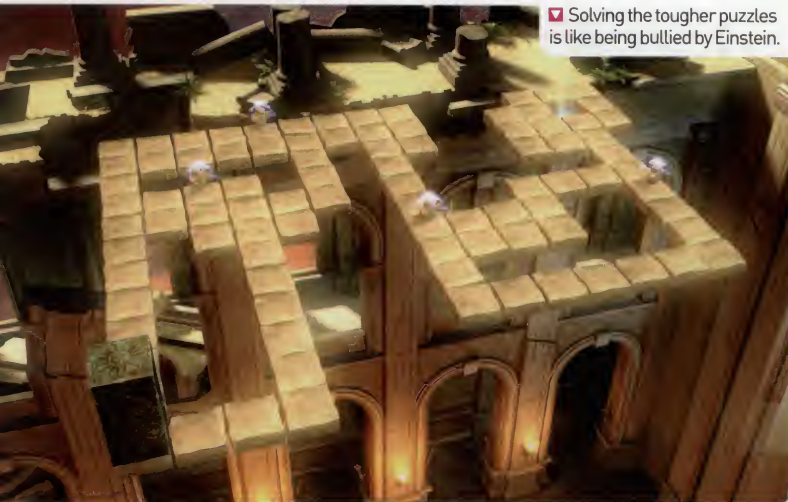
Format PS3 ETA Out now Pub EA
Dev Criterion Players 1-8 Web
critteriongames.com It's like Burnout
Paradise, with more night-time,
motorbikes and horror crashes.

there are only four different bikes, and the bike-specific events are not only rarer than their car counterparts, but consist entirely of time trial burnout routes. It's pretty lonely out there.

The bikes work best online, where you can get together with friends and make your own races and events. But if you're on the nets then presumably you'll have downloaded the Bike pack already. See, The Ultimate Box works best if you don't have Burnout at all – in that case, it's an essential game that just got even more, um, essential. But if you've got the game and just can't download the extras, it's your call – you might be desperate for the bikes and twilight, but be aware that most of the extra gameplay is geared towards online (there are scores of new Freeburn challenges). The Party Pack

tries to redress this balance, but is minor league. Burnout Paradise is still brilliant, but it's designed to work online, and even with these extra bits, the offline play isn't as strong. Oh, and where's our GPS? **Nathan Dittum**





✓ Solving the tougher puzzles is like being bullied by Einstein.

Grid grinding

Cuboid

Blockheaded puzzler

Among the cute cartoon elephants and jaunty pirates of the PSN puzzle gang, Cuboid is the closest you'll get to S&M. It's got all the looks and tenderness of a Russian prison guard, and it wants you to fail.

Oh sure, it sounds easy enough. To reach the glowing blue goal at the end of each level you just have to move your rectangular block, end over end, in one of four directions. Your block is two smaller square blocks stuck together, so depending on which way you roll, your 'footprint' will take up either one or two squares on the suspended in mid-air grid. The grids are odd maze-like shapes and the key is in positioning your block – by way of much circuitous back and forth – so that it can pass through thin stretches and tight corners without tumbling off the edge.

Fun squared

And that's only the beginning. Just when you've mastered the basics, it adds gadgets. There's the teleporter that splits your block into two separate squares that can move individually, switches that activate new paths, and wooden tiles that break. It'll even include these elements to trick you. I spent 20 minutes on one particular level until I realised I didn't even need the teleporter. Cuboid 1 –



Info

Format PSN download **ETA** Out now
Pub TikGames **Dev** Creat Studios
Players 1 **Web** snipurl.com/cbjch **It's like** A sponge that sucks up your self esteem.



▲ Parts of the game appear to be set in a satanic cult's common room.



▲ Switches, teleporters, moving bridges... Oh c'mon Cuboid, throw us a bone here.

Pride 0. Even the Trophies are humiliating: my only one, the Abyss Trophy, was for falling so much.

There are some rough edges (the weird deserted church setting, the broken leaderboards and bland soundtrack) but the difficulty isn't one of them. And that's what keeps you playing. Forget fun – after the fury of watching your cube slide off the grid for the tenth time as your move count edges past 500, all you'll care about is proving to

yourself that you're not stupid. If you want fun, play Elefunk, but for a sterner challenge, Cuboid is your man.

Rachel Penny



Japan Watch

This month's overseas action in a nutshell

Soul Eater Battle Resonance

Format PSP Pub Namco Bandai Subtitles No

Based on a popular manga and anime of the same name, Soul Eater Battle Resonance pitches young students of the God Of Death against one another to power up their demon-trouncing weapons with the requisite 99 bad human souls plus one witch's soul. My soul is shrivelling like a Domino's anchovy at the prospect.





Fantasy Golf PangYa Portable

Format PSP Pub NtreevSoft Subtitles No

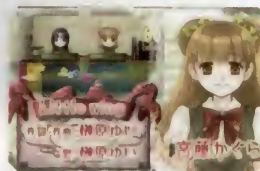
Since my idea of fantasy golf involves a nitrous-equipped buggy, a flamethrower and an army of zombies in tasseled loafers, this effort fails to satisfy. That said, if Everybody's Golf is a little too gritty for you, this ultra-gaudy stroll around the links should be perfect.



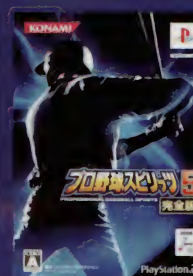
Solfege Sweet Harmony

Format PSP Pub GungHo Subtitles No

From the boilerplate Hentai character design and vaguely suspicious title you'd be forgiven for thinking that the description of Solfege's gameplay as 'handheld rhythm action' was a thinly veiled euphemism leading to my immediate dismissal. But you'd be wrong – about the first part at the very least.

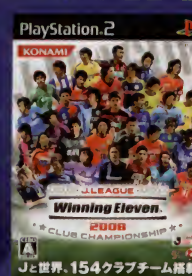


Exotic Boxart Of The Month



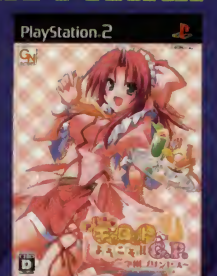
Pro Yakyuu Spirits 5 Kanzenban

Wisely concluding that not even the fans would recognise a Japanese baseball MVP, this cover leaves you to imagine which athlete is on the cover.



Winning Eleven 2008 Club Edition

No prima donnas scrapping for position on the cover of PES's domestic spin-off. Every player in the league is here to create this hypnotic dog's dinner.



Pia Carrot e Youkoso

As an adult male, this boxart is too pink for my eyes to register, but I have it on good authority from our Rachel that it's a nice, non-controversial picture of puppies at a picnic. Phew!

Let them get too close and you'll have egg on your face. No wait, it's blood again.



Dead loss

Shellshock 2 Blood Trails

"You weren't there, maaaaan!" (Thank God)

All boys who grew up in Britain during the '80s absolutely love the Vietnam War. Partly because our older brothers weren't shipped off to become pro-am Russian roulette players, but also because the rise of VHS coincided with a glut of 'Nam movies, from the arthouse heartbreak of Full Metal Jacket to the crass exploitation of Missing In Action. But despite the potential of the material, developers mostly steered clear until 2004, when a flurry of games including Conflict Vietnam, Battlefield Vietnam and Shellshock: Nam '67 appeared almost simultaneously. Predictably, the quality was more Norris than Kubrick.

And until now that was basically that. Shellshock 2 was slipped into the shops before it could be reviewed, so being given the disc feels like getting palmed



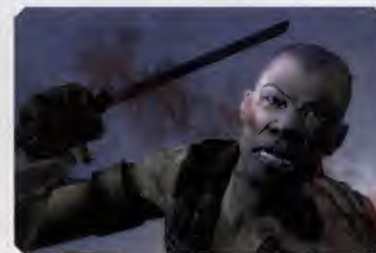
the black spot in Treasure Island. Although the original was developed by Guerrilla, of Killzone fame, don't let that fool you – it was rubbish, and the sequel is worse. To be fair, this first-person shooter from Rebellion at least has a funny premise: zombies in 'nam! The good times pretty much end there, though. You're cast as a grunt whose brother appears to be the catalyst for an outbreak of undeadness. From there on everything about it screams 'will this do?' The answer is not even nearly.

Casualty of war

The framerate is pathetic and the textures are sub-PS2. In a typical firefight enemies appear from nowhere, making it like playing Whac-A-Mole with an M16 in the dark. Instantly surrounded, trying to pick out your attackers against the wretched backgrounds proves an utterly miserable experience. Meanwhile, they're able to hit you unfailingly from any distance. It might replicate the actual experience of being a GI in 'Nam, but quality entertainment it ain't. Oh, and



The Viet Cong are so well camouflaged you'll often find yourself tearfully shooting at the treeline.



Intrusive Sixaxis sequences are used for the melee wrestles. Mess up and it's instant death.



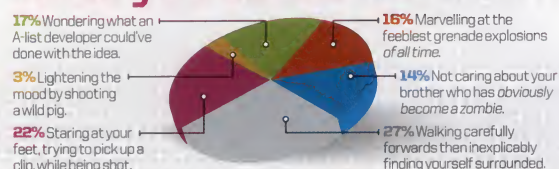
Much of it takes place at night, possibly because it's embarrassed by its own graphics.

it almost goes without saying that the controls feel jerky and cheap. Other highlights include a man dressed in pyjamas shrugging off a direct rocket hit, a corpse clipping through a sandbag so the head poked sadly out of the top, the Viet Cong seemingly ice-skating down a hill and a sad zombie trapped in the same three-second loop. Want more? How about having to pick up ammo manually, the screen-obscuring reload animations, and the hateful, intrusive, Sixaxis-based instant death sequences.

The only positive about the game remains its premise, which creates a vague compunction to play on just to find out what the developer does with the zombies. Precious little as it turns out, but at least they can't bullseye you from miles away with an AK-47. Mercifully, there's no multiplayer. And so, in what's

one of the most hard fought genres on PS3, Shellshock 2 is one of the weakest efforts yet. It was clearly only made because the original sold bizarrely well, so follow our dire warnings this time and leave it for dead. **Tim Clark**

What you do in... Shellshock 2





It's a game featuring pink stretchy things in which you report your length to a Girl. Yours for £3.19.

Stretchy sandbox

Noby Noby Boy

Colourful madness that reaches for the stars



Noby Noby Boy is the latest oddity from the brain of Keita Takahashi – the cheese-dream pioneer behind Katamari Damacy. It'll have you tying yourself up in knots as you figure out precisely what it is and what you're supposed to do. In fact working out what is going on is just about the entire point of the game. So at the risk of spoiling things (just a little bit) here's how it works.

So there's a Boy, and he's this tiny pink waddling thing, and there's a Girl and she's a giant elongated crawly thing that sits on top of the Earth, and as you control Boy he stretches and eats stuff, and as he stretches and eats stuff, Girl elongates until she reaches the moon and beyond. When she reaches the moon, Boy can go there to explore, which is essentially more waddling, eating, and stretching. And so it goes as Girl reaches further into the depths of our solar system.

Castlist

The hero



Boy
Pink and stretchy he starts out small and waddly, and ends up long and wobbly.

The lady



Girl
Also pink and stretchy but she's busy reaching out to other planets.

The star



Sun
As Girl stretches into space she'll reach new destinations like Sun, here.

It's not just you and your Boy helping Girl bungee out into the cosmos. Every person playing Noby Noby will help Girl grow. Apart from unlocking Trophies, the only competitive challenge is improving your ranking on the game's Girl-shaped, online leaderboard. The other interesting thing is that Boy waddles and eats even while you're *not* playing with or watching him. Which means that in one way it's a bit like Folding@home, except here the goal isn't a cure for cancer, just world harmony and an ever expanding Girl. (Not you, Jessica Simpson.)

Long and short of it

But the most interesting thing is the game itself, which sees you visiting a series of tile-shaped sandbox environments, just, well, eating and stretching – wrestling with the increasing length of Boy as he gets tangled up with people on bikes, dogs and chickens. You might decide you want to eat some of these things, for example, and then fart



Seconds later the chicken was heading towards Noby Noby Boy's damask poop chute.

them out. Or you might try to get them to take a ride on your back, or see how many times you can wrap Boy around a cloud. Whatever you want to do, just do it, because in the absence of any other objectives, just doing it is its own reward.

And that's it. It's variously charming, quirky, surprising, and yes, occasionally, boring. But that's not a problem, because Noby Noby Boy is the sort of game that you can just dip into when you want to fill the downtime between other games. It's a bit like messing around with a rubber band at work: there's no immediate point, and little danger of your pulse racing, but it does set your mind free from the

drudgery of the real world, letting your imagination wander off to new and interesting places. Because of this (and a wallet-friendly £3.19 entry fee) Noby Noby is an odd but very welcome addition to PSN.

David McCarthy



❑ To fight monsters, your men will transform into monsters themselves.



Princess pursuit

White Knight Chronicles

Like a Milky Bar to fill the gap between Final Fantasies

Info
Format PS3 **ETA** Japan import **Pub** Sony **Dev** Level-5 **Players** 1 (4 online)
Web level5.co.jp/products/shirokishi/index.html **It's like** Final Fantasy XI And Final Fantasy XII.

When White Knight Chronicles first appeared way back at the Tokyo Game Show in 2006, the internet lost the run of itself over some grainy clips showing action-heavy combat and the towering titular figure of the White Knight. After that, it seemed to go off-grid, with nothing but the feverish anticipation surrounding Final Fantasy XIII to keep fans of Japanese RPGs busy. And yet with only minimal build-up White Knight Chronicles shot to number one on release in its native Japan. But is it *really* anything to get excited about?

It doesn't, it has to be said, look quite as dynamic as those early videos suggested, but it is an attractive game making good use of PS3's capacity to display big, lush, detailed environments. The character design is pretty good, the world is filled

Castlist

Princess



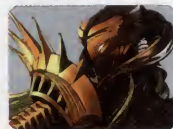
Princess Cisna
 Her birthday party is ruined when daddy's murdered and she gets kidnapped.

Hero



Leonard
 Things get hairy after Leonard delivers the wine for Princess Cisna's party.

Villain?



Black Knight
 According to the law, he's dressed in black, so he's gotta be evil, right?

with exotic races and strange faces, and the cut-scenes are quality (especially some amazing prerendered sequences, which see you flying through the sky on the spiny back of a vast lizard, or witnessing a city-sized reptile lumber through an enormous canyon).

World of White Knight

Graphics aside, the single-player game is essentially one long grind, finding new and interesting monsters to fight so that your characters can learn new and more interesting ways to kill them. But the combat is like something out of a World Of Warcraft or Everquest-style MMO – and if you've never played those, think Final Fantasy XII. White Knight uses a similar combat system, which sees you map your character's skills to a menu that you access in real-time, while your teammates are controlled by AI.

The thing that really distinguishes the combat, however, is the lead character's ability to turn himself into the White Knight, temporarily transforming into a super-powerful giant, capable of

defeating even the scariest behemoth boss. That's because the lead character, Leonard, just happens to have stumbled upon a mysterious artefact while trying to save Princess Cisna from being kidnapped on her birthday. In fact, the story is the usual save-the-princess stuff, and basically amounts to one long chase across the world as your ever-growing ragtag band seek to retrieve her from the evil clutches of the Wizard Corporation.

But it's weird: at the end of 40-odd hours battling and exploring with these characters you'll have come to know and love them, but the story moves at such a glacial pace you won't feel like they've



❑ Toad of Toad Hall enjoys a successful second career as a minor elemental demon in Japan.

White Knight is 40 hours long and the first part of a trilogy.



In battle you select actions from the customisable skills menu at the bottom of the screen.

actually done much. There are characters introduced early in the game who you won't see much of until, presumably, they resurface in the sequel. That's because White Knight Chronicles is just the first part of a planned trilogy, so even when you get to the end of the game it doesn't quite achieve closure.

Hooking up online

It's also weird that when you start the game you spend a fair amount of time creating your very own custom character, who then plays little part in the story that follows – or it would be weird, were it not for the online part of the game, which is what really sets White Knight apart from the competition. It's a little bit like Final Fantasy XI and a little bit like Phantasy Star, and anyone who's played either of those games will know exactly how much fun it can be to head online and hook up with some friends.

Unlock quests during the single-player



Dregeas is an early boss, but one who dogs your progress for the whole game.

game and you can then play them online with your custom-built character. And jumping straight into the quests means you get the good bits of massively multiplayer gaming without the bad (like forgetting to feed the kids). One big word of warning though: if you can't wait for the European release later this year, you'll need to know Japanese to

follow the story. And if you can't read Japanese, why not? White Knight Chronicles isn't quite up there with the very best of the JRPG genre, but it's pretty damn close.

David McCarthy



PlayList

Essential tunes to download this month

Dan Deacon Bromst

Format Album ETA 23 March Price £7.99

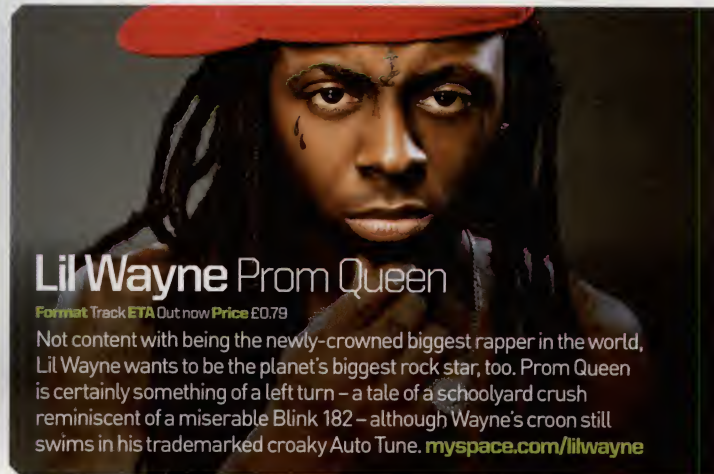
Dan is celebrated in his hometown of Baltimore for sweaty warehouse shows that find him in the crowd, leading the kind of life-affirming sing-alongs that'd put the Flaming Lips to shame. Bromst is enjoyably weird, with 8-bit beats and jelly keyboards that skirt novelty but come out just plain fun. myspace.com/dandeacon



Lil Wayne Prom Queen

Format Track ETA Out now Price £0.79

Not content with being the newly-crowned biggest rapper in the world, Lil Wayne wants to be the planet's biggest rock star, too. Prom Queen is certainly something of a left turn – a tale of a schoolyard crush reminiscent of a miserable Blink 182 – although Wayne's croon still swims in his trademarked croaky Auto Tune. myspace.com/lilwayne



Mastodon Divinations

Format Track ETA Out now Price £0.79

Burly men of rock return with a new slab of thatch-shaking heaviness hewn from forthcoming album Crack The Skye (archaic spelling band's own). Jagged guitars, crazed man-of-the-mountain vocals, and fast, tumbling drums provide a 'caught in an avalanche' vibe. myspace.com/mastodon



Download of the month Micachu Jewellery

Format Album ETA Out now Price £7.99

Mica Levi has one foot in the classical seminaries (she's written for the London Symphonic Orchestra) and the other in the clubs of East London. This is her debut album proper – leftfield pop songs played on home-built instruments with a wonky charm. myspace.com/micayomusic



reviewPS3

50 Cent: Blood On The Sand

▼ Blood On The Sand is geared for fun so just relax and go with the crazy.



▲ With all the combos, points and cash on offer, the screen is usually cluttered with gifts.



▲ Handguns have infinite ammo so save up for the Magnum and you'll never look back.



▲ Dodging suicide bombers in trucks is just one of the wrongheaded bits here.

Wanksta's paradise

50 Cent Blood On The Sand

We're gonna party like it's your sequel

Okay, fine, so this is what the End Days look like. Capitalism is devouring itself, the unlovable '80s are making yet another comeback, the climate is has somehow become eternal winter and a 50 Cent sequel is the most enjoyable game I've played so far this year. Frankly, if the dead started walking now I'd offer them a cup of tea.

Skull shortage

Blood On The Sand embraces the crazy early doors and continues well past last orders. The game opens with Fiddy and G-Unit coming off stage in war-torn Generistan only to get paid with a diamond-encrusted human skull.

Devtalk



"The setting is a pastiche of different war-torn environments. In a real place, I don't think the larger-than-life gameplay would work."
Julian Widdows
Game director,
Swordfish Studios

Naturally, this gets stolen immediately, sending Curtis plus one on a predictably shooty mission to retrieve it (like Resi 5 – well, a bit – Fiddy 2 is hardwired for co-op play, either online or with an AI-controlled buddy). Cue gunship rides, suicide bombers in Hilux pickups and enough other terrorist-inspired stereotypes to fill Dubya's retirement cheese dreams forever.

Cleverly, the developer has recognised that taking any of this seriously would be madder than the premise itself, and so goes balls out to make the experience extraordinary, memorable and fun. Your enemies are legion and the AI nicely aggressive but, sportingly, they haven't been briefed on the latest flanking subroutines. The merking, meanwhile, is brazenly arcade. Chain kills together and your combo points start to look like Fiddy's bank balance. And everything you do earns either points or dollar. Pick up a weapon or ammo: points. Ace any of the mini-games: points. Collect any of the five hidden posters and targets in every level: points, points,



Info

Format PS3 ETA Out now Pub THQ
Dev Swordfish Studios Players 1-2
Web 50bloodonthesand.com It's
like Relocating the war on terror
to a custom car expo.

points. Checkpoints are generous, a speedily-regenerating health bar replaces the first game's body armour, and payphones to buy new guns, salty taunts and counterkill melee finishers are just where you need them. And the soundtrack features 18 new tracks by Mr Bulletproof himself.

But the game's strongest suit is the character that 50 Cent and G-Unit bring to the action – whether it's Fiddy getting the giggles when Tony Yayo reveals an in-depth knowledge of Napoleonic architecture, or the big man

comparing a bombed-out theatre to Lloyd Bank's "s**thole of an apartment". Backed up by crowd-pleasing gameplay, Blood On The Sand is genuinely hard not to enjoy. No, really.

Paul Fitzpatrick



▲ In-action mini-games highlight key goons for huge hauls of points.

PlayStation®

Official Magazine - UK

7



✓ The bigger Sai units rock a My First Post-Apocalyptic Monster kit look.



✗ Sending your ground troops out into the open is a terrible, massacre-inviting mistake.



Military blunder

Stormrise

If this is what the end of the world is like, we're out



Info

Format PS3 ETA Out now Pub Sega
Dev Creative Assembly Players 1-8
Web stormrisegame.com
It's like Playing toy soldiers with a
pool cue gaffer-taped to both arms.

Welcome to the future, where civilisation has shuddered to a big brown halt because you didn't recycle your takeaway containers. A select few have cryo-slept through the environmental holocaust and emerged as the tech-heavy Echelon. The ones they left behind have evolved into the psychic, savage Sai. Now they're fighting. Of course they are.

The big deal with Stormrise is that developer Creative Assembly has tried really, really hard to make playing real-time strategy on a console *not* an infuriating bag of balls, despite the lack of a mouse and keyboard to direct your army. The even bigger but slightly sadder deal is that it hasn't worked – not for want of effort or imagination, or even because the underlying game is unbalanced, but because making your men do what you want, when you want, is still clumsy and imprecise.

Central to Stormrise's claims is its 'whip select' feature, which aims to replicate the speed and accuracy with

Like this? Play these



Tom Clancy's Endwar

Simple RTS with the massive advantage of (really good) voice-activated controls.

VERDICT 8



Sid Meier's Civilization Revolution Similar harvest, build, and fight mechanic, but with pansy scientific alternative route to victory.


VERDICT 8

which you can click on different units using a mouse. The idea is simple. The game's default view is the battlefield-level perspective of whichever unit you currently have selected (as opposed to the aerial, general's-eye-view typical of most RTS games). By moving the right stick you trigger an orange selection line which can point in any direction over the battlefield and will display the insignia of your other units when hovered over them – release the stick while the insignia's highlighted and you're 'whipped' to that other unit.

Whip crack away

It's a smart idea and, with a bit of practice, it's snappy enough to work – but only for the quieter bits. When you're building up your units, setting up energy refineries and preparing for clashes, it's fine. But when the action really kicks in – when you have to precisely co-ordinate the charge of your Enforcer ground troops with air support from your Hunter VTOLs, or scramble a defence to repel a surprise attack, it's just too confusing. If the units you're after are behind you, the orange line traces to the side of the screen, and if you have lots of units then picking

which one you want at a glance is impossible. When you're panicked, it feels like you're throwing a desperate, suicidal hail mary pass over the back of your head in Madden, hoping you'll reach the wide receiver.

There's a 'tactical' map you can access with , but it still doesn't give you the proper overhead view the game is crying out for, and to make things worse it's orange and blocky and looks like hell. The limitation is intentional – you can produce high-flying aerial units which give you the tactical advantage of seeing farther – but with the controls already hamstrung, it just makes things even messier.

Which is a shame, because the game underneath all this – the balance of different units and their various strengths and weaknesses – is clearly tight and well-balanced. But playing it with the controls as they are feels like trying to caress a beautiful woman through

boxing gloves. Endwar probably made the smarter move in dumbing down and moving to voice control, because there's nothing here to suggest that full-blown RTS controls can be squeezed onto a Sixaxis. **Nathan Ditum**



STORMRISE™

COMMAND THE CONFLICT
ON EVERY LEVEL



❑ The mechs look and feel cheap, making combat flimsy.

Mech weight

Dynasty Warriors Gundam 2

Any old iron

Apparently, being a bloke strapped inside a bristling, intergalactic warbot feels a lot like being a bloke on a horse in feudal China. While the futuristic sci-fi setting and characters may be radically different, Gundam 2 handles almost identically to any other outing in Koei's Dynasty Warrior series.

Based on the eponymous anime series, Gundam sees you trading lacquered armour for house-sized mecha-suits in order to fight countless other men in massive mecha-suits for control of futuristic battlefields. It's a bit like a simple RTS, in that you have to defend your own bases while capturing enemy ones. Only, instead of a blend of wits and micro management, victory is secured by relentlessly pressing **Ⓢ** to stove in your rivals' bodywork.

Toy story

Things would be fine if said stoving was actually fun, but the mechs have no real sense of mass so fighting feels like knocking plastic Transformers together, while the scale of the environments does nothing to convince you that you're battling for galactic supremacy



Info

Format PS3 ETA 27 Mar
Pub Namco Bandai Dev Koei
Players 1-2 Web snipurl.com/chh8y It's like The exact same gotta-kill-'em-all formula as Dynasty Warriors.



rather than for control of toy town.

The three-button combat – **Ⓢ** for a melee attack, **ⓐ** for guns and a special on **Ⓢ** – is maddeningly repetitive. There's some vague catharsis to the sheer number of robots you kill, but even that pleasure is quickly diluted when the price is appalling pop-up, an unruly camera and AI so docile and seemingly disinterested you might as well be doing shifts in a breakers' yard. There is a whole lot of game here – with dozens of missions and 15+ playable characters –

but there's not nearly enough engagement in this one-note, ugly button basher to make anyone sane care.

Dave Meikleham



16+

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The future is fusion

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17 years on, Sonic 2 – the first to feature Tails – still looks lush.

Blue sky thinking

Sega Mega Drive Ultimate Collection

Returning to the house that Sonic built

This is gaming as comfort food. There's no glamour to it, in fact it's more like buying a random box of stuff from a car boot sale and finding treasure inside. Fact is, you surely already have an opinion on ancient, 2D games with next-to-no controls, but if you *don't* have a blinding nostalgic throb for these games and have an open mind – perhaps you enjoy playing the odd PSN game – you could do much worse than this.

With 40 games on one disc, there's bound to be something that grabs you – especially as some of them are genuinely Classic with a big C, rather than in the patronising 'it's old so it must be good' sense. The first three Sonic games are a good example, as are the compellingly weird Ecco The Dolphin games, the Golden Axe and Streets Of Rage trilogies and the three Phantasy Star RPGs. Oddly though, you only get 2, 3 and 4 – the first is missing. In-between these there are all kinds of things good for ten minutes of messing about, such as twee platformer Flicky, the good-looking Vectorman or even the ironic blurb for Fatal Labyrinth ("In a shocking twist, this RPG features a

Info

Format PS3 ETA Out now
 Pub Sega Dev Sega
 Players 1-2 Web sega.co.uk
 It's like Being a very rich gamer, circa 1993.



As side-scrolling beat-'em-ups go, the Streets Of Rage series still holds up well.

kingdom in danger that can only be saved by a chosen warrior...")

Byte me

Best of all, technically it's fairly good. You can play windowed or widescreen, freely alter screen width and height, and choose a 'smoothing' option for prettier textures. It's actually better windowed, as things can get jerky when it's stretched to fit a big screen. See, it doesn't pay to stare at the past too hard, but it's worth more than a rose-tinted glance.

Steve Williams



VERTICALITY

Gain access to higher grounds to increase tactical advantage.

SEAMLESS MULTIPLAY

Instantly jump in and out of immersive action against friends online – up to 8 players.

FRONTLINE COMMAND

Intuitive, fast paced control of your troops across massive battlefields.

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✔ Little men, big heads, lots of fun. That's 3-On-3 in a nutshell.

Ice gold

3-On-3 NHL Arcade

Hockey with big heads – yes! – at last

There's a case to be made for 3-On-3 Arcade's 'mini-goalie' being the greatest power-up in any game ever. Skate your player over the red skull-and-crossbones hockey mask icon (see right) and your opposition's netman shrinks with a high-pitched, Alvin & The Chipmunks-style "ohhhhh NO!", while your human opponent invariably lets out a long chain of the big words. What follows is a frantic 30-or-so seconds where you desperately try to smash the puck past the now-miniature netman, where your opponent tries to keep possession by any means possible, and where everyone else in the vicinity makes all sorts of noises – screams of panic, bursts of laughter, yelps of wonderment ("How the frig has he saved THAT?") – until either a goal is scored or the keeper reverts to normal size. It's just superb. And the same can be said of the entire game.

The magic number

In this PSN-only spin-off of EA Canada's NHL 09, each team is made up of three (massive-headed) outfield players plus a goaltender, and any of those outfield players can be human-controlled either

Power-ups



Skeleto mask
Turns opponent netman teeny.



Frosted flake
Freezes an opposing player.



Forbidden fruit
Sends you slipping to the ice.

locally or online. Given how realistically the NHL 09 engine emulates real hockey, that alone would be make for a top-quality, competitive sports game; but sling in a selection of eight power-ups which appear at random anywhere on the ice and you have what amounts to an eight-man riot in the name of sport. Only this riot isn't just violent and profane. It's also hilarious.

For instance, collect the rocket shot icon and any pop at goal not only has a greater chance of flying past the keeper, but it also sends any defender who gets in its way sprawling backwards across the ice. Nab the dumbbells power-up and your player doubles in size, causing other players to comedically bounce off him if they come into contact. And there's a free-for-all whenever the +2 icon appears – it means scoring two goals for the price of one, which only adds to the intensity when a hard-fought first-to-ten game is tantalisingly poised at 9-8. Still, win or lose a close one and you're always desperate to jump straight into the next game. Matches can turn on a



✔ Mini-goalie's shrill yelps and spectacular, desperate saves are both exciting and funny.



✔ Press **△** when one-on-one with the keeper to attempt to fool him with a trick shot.



✔ Team colours are limited to 'Red' vs 'Blue', but you'll soon be laughing too hard to care.



Info

Format PSN download **ETA** Out now
Pub EA Dev EA Canada **Players** 1-6
Web easports.com/nhl09/arcade.jsp
It's like Real Ice hockey, but with big heads and bigger power-ups.

fortunately-placed power-up, or one instinctive slapshot, or a magic piece of skill, and you always feel like your next victory is just around the corner.

The only minor negative here is that going solo against the computer after playing a friend inevitably feels like a comedown – when you're used to the desperate cries of an opponent who's just had two of his players literally frozen, playing in silence feels a bit soulless. So get your mates round (or invest in a headset) before shelling out the super-reasonable £6.29 price. And offer

a silent word of thanks to the developer while you're at it.

While some of their contemporaries are struggling to make one great sports game, EA's Canucks have delivered two in the space of six months. **Ben Wilson**





Cruise control

OutRun Online Arcade

Put your foot down and... relax

Sunshine visuals, no-nonsense handling, an upbeat keyboard soundtrack that oozes retro charm and the joy of going to the arcade for the first time... OutRun Online Arcade couldn't be more '80s if it came in a fluorescent pink box with a free striking miner. Only there is no box – it's a six quid PSN download – and unlike that copy of the Breakfast Club under your bed there's no shame in owning this.

Vegas, baby!

Split into 15 stages based on real places – a gorgeous, rain-drenched Casino Town that mimics Las Vegas at night is the pick of the bunch – this is the same time-extend checkpoint-to-checkpoint racer as 2003 arcade release OutRun 2 SP. You get a standard arcade mode, time trials where you try to top your best performances, and, the best of the bunch, heart attack mode. As well as watching the clock and keeping your foot down, this mode also requires you to meet the incessant demands of a pretty lady passenger while driving. (Who says OutRun isn't realistic?) Do as she says – dodge traffic, slipstream, drive through ghosts (!?) – to rack up hearts and try to beat your best score.

It's fast and fun, but given that you're only competing with yourself, does get repetitive. That's

Info

Format PSN download ETA 26 Mar Pub Sega Dev Sumo Players 1-6 Web sega.co.uk It's like A Happier World where a blonde and a Ferrari are all you'll ever need.



▲ Casino Town, AKA Las Vegas at night, is OutRun's best (and most neon) stage.

where online comes in: you can now race against up to five other players on PSN. Settings are limited to which stages you compete on (five per race, or all 15 if you fancy a sickly, it-feels-like-I've-eaten-too-much-Haribo-style marathon), what car you drive, and whether to utilise race-tightening catch-up AI (choices: 'On' or, from my experience, 'Ass Handed To You'). Yet in comparison to the enjoyable but insubstantial solo modes these options feel exhaustive, and competing against real people is a major step up from racing the AI or your own ghost cars.

The result is a package far more substantial than the sum of its parts, that you're duty bound to try if you own 1) a PS3 and 2) six pounds. **Ben Wilson**



Straight to bargain bin

With **Nathan Ditum**



There's not a massive amount wrong with **Disney: Think Fast The Family Quiz Game**, especially since I won our in-office game by a margin of over 2,000 points. It's pretty much exactly the same as Buzz, except Aladdin's Genie asks the questions instead of Sony's grating presenter douche, and the questions are all about Disney films. Not that knowing the most about Disney films will win you the game – hammering the buttons repeatedly in the quick reactions round and picking mercilessly on your nearest competitors in the Judas points-stealing round will do that. Because if children's quiz games are about anything, it's not learning and being friends with others but alienating your colleagues and making you look like a smug alpha monkey. Score!

'Take that, Mr Potato Head, you stupid round turd!' My very best moment in **Hasbro Family Game Night** is trapping the sinister pork pie-hatted spud with a classic diagonal-vertical crossover in Connect 4. 'What have you got? WHAT HAVE YOU GOT?' The reason I'm so furious is because it's impossible not to think that the computer is cheating – secretly looking at where you've hidden your battleships and loading the digital dice in Yahtzee – because that's definitely what I would be doing if I was in charge. The selection of games on offer is thin and mad – as well as Connect 4, Battleships and Yahtzee, there's Boggle and Sorry! – and the same logic behind the selection is applied to the game's choice of host, which ludicrously is Mr Potato Head flying around a Jetsons-style apartment with a bubble-powered jetpack. He goes in the chipper with his game.



My biggest problem with last month's High School Musical 3 dancemat game was the lack of footage from the films (if I'm paying premium dollar I want my pound of flesh, okay?). Luckily, **Disney Sing It High School Musical 3: Senior Year** features bright, lively and real music videos to accompany each of the songs taken from the second and third films. Big hooray. The problem, as I discovered humming weakly into a SingStar mic, is that it doesn't really matter what noise you present the game with, or even if you know the tune of the songs, happy things will happen anyway. Happy things that don't just include staring at Vanessa Hudgens' impossibly clean skin. Yeah, time to stop now.

Abomination of the month

Dora The Explorer is a bewilderingly noisy cartoon which somehow claims to be educational ('It's teaching me Spanish!' my son cried through indignant tears, even though the only word he could say was 'backpack' in a loud Latino accent).

Dora Saves The Snow Princess is the same, only with inferior visuals (disastrous, considering I could've drawn the cartoon with a pencil jammed up my nostril) and less of an emphasis on learning (all the buttons do the same thing and the game baby-talks you through each press like a trainer encouraging a dog to balance a biscuit on its nose). It's aimed either at those who haven't started school, or are beyond any form of self-improvement. Which is probably me, but I'm still out.





❑ Ronny was unplayable this week – the big, stupid, ghost legs cheat character.



Shock loss for OPM

Defensive shambles results in 3-0 beating

So, imagine you're Arsene Wenger and your delicate little princes are about to take on the massively in-form Manchester United. Do you, a) tell your side to go for broke from the off, b) sit back and cautiously wait for an opening, or c) let Ronaldo skip past the clumsy, despairing challenges of at least five defenders practically from the kick-off to blast home a demoralising opener?

If you chose a) or b), congratulations – you're not an idiot, and your FIFA 10 vs 10 side probably didn't get smashed up this

week. We went for c), which is why we ended up losing 3-0 after a thoroughly abject performance which saw us concede further goals from Rooney and Ronaldo. There were sparks of life – Liverpool101 went through on goal just after the break and was denied by Van Der Sar – but this was a match to forget.

If you want to help strengthen our squad, or your team want their chance to turn us over, then head on over to gamesradar.com/fifa09onlinechallenge to register. See you on the park.



Sign up to play our FIFA 09 side now
gamesradar.com/fifa09onlinechallenge



Monster RPG

Star Ocean Second Evolution

Final Fantasy in space? We're on board

Here are two perfectly good reasons to play Star Ocean. Firstly, its name is so pretty. Star Ocean – a big fat sky full of things to explore and discover, and, well, you know, kill in turn-based combat. Secondly, and more strongly, like its better-known cousin Dragon Quest, it's (relatively) fast-paced and, if you can give yourself over to it, totally compelling.

Second Evolution is an update of the second Star Ocean game on PS1, and features new anime cut-scenes, voice acting and a polished (some might say 'fixed') translation. You play as one of two heroes – Claude the reluctant Federation ensign, or Rena the young country girl searching for her missing parents. Their paths cross when Claude has a space accident and lands near Rena's village, lasering up a monster which is about to attack her. There have been a lot of monsters about recently (of course there have!) and so the pair set out to discover why.

Sea breeze

The gameplay holds exactly zero surprises, clinging like a limpet to the regular RPG mix of cut-scenes, exploration and battles. Fighting is simple but effective, with you handling your party leader while control of your comrades passes to the AI. The difficulty scales



Info

Format PSP **ETA** Out now **Pub** Square Enix **Dev** Square Enix
Players 1 **Web** enixurl.com/bt4au
It's like If Dragon Quest had little RPG babies with Star Trek.



▲ Lasers make a lame zapping sound but burn the bugs to ash in double-quick time.

satisfyingly as you progress – no nasty 'fight, death, fight, death, repeat' moments – demanding a more complicated balance of physical and magical attacks as you step out of the baby areas and into the meaner bits of Rena's home planet of Expel.

Mercifully the long-winded backtracking that plagued the first PSP Star Ocean remake is long gone, and even without counting the sidequests there are around 30 hours of adventuring on offer here (adventuring that *isn't* dominated by endlessly fetching and delivering random objects). Combined with

snappy visuals and a real sense of polish and love in the new localisation, this makes Second Evolution one of the strongest JRPGs on PSP. **Simon Parkin**



BluMovies

HD films to feed your next-gen disc player



Raging Bull

Director Martin Scorsese **Starring** Robert De Niro, Joe Pesci **ETA** Out now

A classic to the extent that scenes of men slo-mo air-boxing while humming Intermezzo From Cavalleria Rusticana in The Sopranos were not only understandable but hilarious. De Niro's never been more convincing or tragic, and though it doesn't have the energy and danger of Taxi Driver or Goodfellas, it's even sadder to make up for it.



Max Payne

Director John Moore **Starring** Mark Wahlberg, Milla Kunis **ETA** Out now

Fairly disastrous Hollywood mess made from the bones of Remedy's obsessively slo-mo shooter. The problem is it ditches the tongue-in-cheek grimace – the arch one-liners, the perpetual grimace – and plays it straight, with Mark Wahlberg sullen and one-note as the bereaved Payne. Pretty in parts, but basically a busted flush.



Baby Mama

Director Michael McCullers **Starring** Tina Fey, Amy Poehler **ETA** Out now

Pretty, funny, self-deprecating Tina Fey. Sigh. This is a mostly successful extension of Fey's work on Saturday Night Live and the ace 30 Rock, with a daft setup – power-suited career woman hires working class screw-up as surrogate mum – providing the basis for loads of light, gags. Funny, and not the chick-flick it's sold as.



Movie of the month

Quantum Of Solace

Director Marc Forster **Starring** Daniel Craig, Olga Kurylenko, Mathias Aymerich **ETA** Out now

Hanging on to the plot of Casino Royale for dear life, this is Bond at his sulkiest. Daniel Craig pouts his way through the action scenes, and the villain looks more like the pale kid who got bullied at school rather than an arch nemesis. Still, with car chases, fiery explosions and smouldering ladies to look at, you'll barely notice.

Crap circle

Destroy All Humans! Path Of The Furon



It's the end of the world as we know it and I feel sad

Please start by destroying those humans responsible for this. It's arguably the worst game on PS3. The only remarkable thing is just how comprehensively rubbish it is. If you own the first two games on PS2, play those instead – they're miles better than this.



✓ Enjoying looking at this picture? Then you're already having more fun than playing the game could ever bring.



Once again you play as Crypto, a small grey alien sent to Earth to harvest DNA and do a really terrible Jack Nicholson impression (presumably because Nicholson was in Mars Attacks!, though not as an alien). He does this by reading minds, probing anuses, wielding ray guns, telekinetically throwing things and even body-snatching innocent humans. Sounds good, right? It used to be. But here, the 50p lavished on building the pastiche of 1970s America ran out long before anyone thought about the script, the missions or the AI. The shooting is wretched, the enemies are hopeless and the controls are still somehow unwieldy after all this time.

Grey expectations

Incredibly, Destroy All Humans! runs on Unreal technology, but the super low-res textures, crayon-fisted architecture, and cataract-like draw distances look more like



Info

Format PS3 **ETA** Out now **Pub** THQ
Dev Sandblast Games **Players** 1-2
Web destroyallhumansgame.com
It's like The last pathetic twitch of a once entertaining series.

something proudly stuck on a fridge with a flower-shaped magnet than Unreal Tournament. There's a key early moment where the anal probe gun is ceremoniously unveiled, and it's almost heartbreaking – you're supposed to be impressed but it looks, poetically, like a dog's arse. And this technical witlessness extends into every area of concept and design. For instance, the neon sign for the Stardust casino (your base) faces backwards over the roof, where no one could possibly read it – except you.



This flickering pile of gaudy boxes is not a world. It's a balsa wood set for an unloved B-movie. It should never have been released.

Steve Williams

Game 4-a-date Find new love



Feeling Game 4 A Date? Are you looking for a dating site that can connect you with people just as passionate about games as you in your area? Online dating doesn't need to be such a hassle; we've gone and made it all really, really easy. **Game 4 A Date** is a dating site designed just for you, helping you to find that someone special who shares a zeal for games.

Just log on to **www.game4adate.com** and follow the simple registration process, fill in your profile and perfect partner preferences and then hey presto: you can now start looking for love. As a special introductory offer you can now **join for just £1***, just enter the offer code **GAME1** when prompted.

Game 4 A Date is fun, it's easy and more importantly, it's about putting you in touch with people who share that same genuine passion as you do for all things videogames. So go on, then, are you *Game 4 A Date?*



visit: **www.game4adate.com**





Everything's pleasingly reflective and shiny. Especially the waistcoats.

Re-racked snooker

WSC Real 09

Sink the blue for a spot of déjà vu

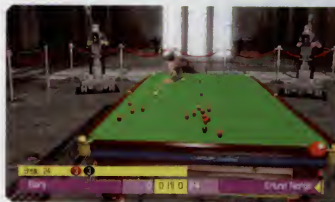
There's a time-honoured, plainly stupid tradition of reviewing snooker/pool/darts games and questioning why you would ever play a console interpretation over the real thing. Here's why: because in reality I'm never going to pull off a 147-break or throw a 180 score. And I've only ever managed one eight-ball clearance which I don't remember all that well. (Thanks, vat of Molson Canadian.) Games like this are made to make you feel like you can play with the pros, and the tools given to you by WSC 09 succeed on that front.

Plant, pot

Most important of these is the overhead view, accessed with (A). To help line shots up, two sets of arrows show the predicted path of both the cue ball and the one you're aiming at, while a black circle shows roughly where the cue ball will stop. This enables you to rack up big breaks by thinking ahead, making you instantly competitive in season mode and any of the seven quick-play games (various versions of snooker, pool and billiards) here. And if you'd rather judge shots with the naked eye, you can turn any or all of the aids off, too.

So why only a 6/10? Because while the top-down perspective is key to keeping you hooked, it's

Info
Format PS3 ETA 3 Apr Pub Blade Interactive Dev Blade Interactive Players 1: 2 Web bladeinteractive.com It's like Not hearing laughter each time you put the cue down.



also been part of this series since the PS1 days. Indeed, there's a been-here-before feel throughout; the only truly new stuff is an updated set of pros and some added visual touches, like little streaks of chalk left on the table after you play a shot. WSC Real 09 is good, but given that you could pick up World

Championship Snooker 2002 on PS2 for 99p on ebay and be hard pressed to see much difference in pure gameplay terms, it hardly represents value for money. **Ben Wilson**



Release Schedule

Coming soon to a PlayStation near you

	Publisher	ETA	Format
Wheelman	Midway	20 Mar	PS3
Resistance Retribution	Sony	20 Mar	PSP
SingStar Queen	Sony	20 Mar	PS3
Afro Samurai	Atari	27 Mar	PS3
Command & Conquer: Red Alert 3	EA	27 Mar	PS3
Dynasty Warriors: Gundam 2	Koei	27 Mar	PS3
Rock Revolution	Konami	27 Mar	PS3
Stormrise	Sega	27 Mar	PS3
The Chronicles Of Riddick: AODA	Atari	27 Mar	PS3
WWE Legends Of Wrestlemania	THQ	27 Mar	PS3
WSC Real 09	Blade Int	3 Apr	PS3
The Godfather II	EA	10 Apr	PS3
Monsters vs Aliens	Activision	Apr	Multi
Rag Doll Kung Fu	Sony	Apr	PSN
Sacred 2: Fallen Angel	Deep Silver	Apr	PS3
Wanted Weapons Of Fate	Warner Bros	Apr	PS3
Batman Arkham Asylum	Eidos	May	PS3
Bionic Commando	Capcom	May	PS3
Damnation	Codemasters	May	PS3
Dark Void	Capcom	May	PS3
Infamous	Sony	May	PS3
Operation Flashpoint Dragon Rising	Codemasters	May	PS3
UFC 2009 Undisputed	THQ	May	PS3
Virtua Tennis 2009	Sega	May	PS3
X-Men Origins: Wolverine	Activision	May	PS3
Ghostbusters	Atari	19 Jun	Multi
Brutal Legend	EA	Jun	PS3
Fight Night Round 4	EA	Jun	PS3
Fuel	Codemasters	Jun	PS3
Dissidia: Final Fantasy	Square Enix	Jul	PSP
I Am Alive	Ubisoft	Jul	PS3
Ride To Hell	Deep Silver	Jul	PS3
Wolfenstein	Activision	Jun	PS3
Harry Potter & The Half Blood Prince	EA	Aug	PS3
Madden NFL 2010	EA	Aug	Multi
Need For Speed Shift	EA	Sep	PS3
Call Of Juarez: Bound In Blood	Ubisoft	Oct	PS3
Mini Ninjas	Eidos	Oct	PS3
Uncharted 2: Among Thieves	Sony	Nov	PS3
Dead To Rights: Retribution	Namco Bandai	Dec	PS3
Battlefield Bad Company 2	EA	Dec	PS3
Final Fantasy XIII	Square Enix	2010	PS3

All release dates are accurate at time of press but liable to change.



READY MADE EXCUSE #29

Pull a sickie for... Wanted Weapons Of Fate

"I fell over playing football. Well, it was a concrete pitch. Yeah, it's sort of gushing. I'm about to pass out but I've put some photos on Facebook."

✓ Played properly, co-op is brilliant thanks to interdependent classes that force people not to be team-killing idiots.



110

Meat squad

Resistance 2

PS3's biggest, bloodiest but not quite best shooter



Info

Format PS3 **ETA** Out now **Pub** Sony **Dev** Insomniac **Players** 2-60 **Web** insomniacgames.com **It's like** Going paintballing with your mates and having loads of aliens turn up.

If there's any complaint you can rightly level at Resistance 2's single-player campaign, it's that your squad's AI is less than world class (in the same way that I'm 'less good' at football than Lionel Messi), and the enemy AI acknowledges this by aiming entirely at you. Which is why the effort that's gone into the multiplayer modes pays off. Playing with real teammates rather than the AI, you can just enjoy the carnage without feeling cheated. Except by your own fundamental lack of thumb control.

Resistance 2's online breaks down into competitive and co-operative modes.

There are four competitive game types: regular and team deathmatches, which are quick and simple and dominate the public listings, and then Core Control (Resistance's take on capture the flag) and the mission-based Skirmish maps, which demand a higher level of team co-operation, and are less popular as a result. The skill-weighted matchmaking goes on behind the scenes – and judging from the acidic comments in some forums, doesn't take place at all – but the games I played seemed relatively even.

The largest maps – the Gray Territory in Orick, the Icelandic Conversion Centre, and the Recon region in Chicago – can hold a whopping 60 deathmatch players at once. This was Resistance 2's big calling card, and joining in a full server feels like you're part of a huge if slightly disorganised army (and you've always got the excuse that you joined in late to account for your low kill count). The maps are big enough to house everyone

without feeling claustrophobic, and getting caught up in the rush of a co-ordinated attack on that scale is fantastic. Of course, the amount of times squad communication will be good enough to achieve that co-ordination depends on the randoms you're dropped in with, but playing with friends will up the odds.

The loadout options from the main game's arsenal (and their intelligent secondary fire options) do a good job of delivering class-like gameplay without the restrictions a more rigid system might bring. In the scrappy competitive multiplayer you can cheerfully get away with choosing whichever loadout you fancy without a tactical disaster.

Sleepless in Chicago

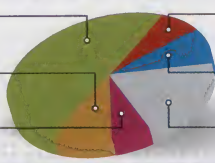
And that's the main difference between Resistance 2's competitive and co-op modes. Where competitive is loose and fun, co-op is more disciplined and

What you do in... Resistance 2

50% Running around, shooting everything you see, for ages.

9% Wishing fiery death on anyone playing as a sniper.

6% Realising that you can't finish the co-op missions by yourself.



8% Setting up your own server so you get a points headstart.

10% Wondering if headsets would make it better or worse.

17% Playing a medic because you're needy and people will like you more.



■ 60-man battles are hectic and brutal like real war, minus the actual risk of agonising death.



■ If you lose your squad there's a loneliness to objective games – and they often end in death.

challenging. It brings out the best in people. Although you can't play co-op through the main story campaign (boo!), the eight-player online maps provide a good challenge, and satisfying rewards for progression that expand the scope of the basic three classes.

These classes may feel simplistic to anyone who's played more complex PC imports such as Team Fortress 2. The soldier's shield and big chain gun enable him to tank effectively, getting in enemies' faces and soaking up hurt, while the special ops guys dole out ammo and damage from the back. Meanwhile, the medic keeps everyone healthy and refuels his special life gun by sucking the plasma out of Chimera.

Simple, yes, but the building-block class system means people tend to stick to their roles. This makes it a much more satisfying game – one that can even survive the silence when no one's playing with headsets. Just sticking together often works fine. At its best there's an excellent feel of Left 4 Dead about

the waves of low-ranking comin'-atcha Chimera. And aside from some problems with respawning either too far from the action, or in the path of a volley of bullets, it's a polished experience.

Joining a game can be something of a ballache, though – with no indication of how long a match has been in progress, it's possible to join just as one is coming to an end. Although 200XP just for logging on is always welcome, the fact that there's no option to say 'let's all play again' means you've just wasted a couple of minutes, with no guarantee that the same thing won't happen again. The solution is to make your own games. You'll find that people join in quite quickly, and it'll often snowball to maximum capacity.

Niggles like these mean that Resistance 2's multiplayer falls short of utter perfection. But it's also approachable, friendly, and thanks to the exhaustive selection of co-op and versus match types, more satisfying than the single-player campaign.

Jon Blyth



Online round-up

With Leon Hurley



C'mon EA, I know Mirror's Edge bombed like the luftwaffe and there's a \$641m loss to recoup, but... really? £3.19 to unlock everything in **Skate 2**? Even the DLC's name is an insult, 'Time Is Money.' No, money is money, and last time I checked

you unlocked everything by tapping buttons on your pad, not your credit card details into PSN. And the Filmer Pack is even worse. For £4.79 I can get advanced camera controls, customised water marks and extra skating gear. I can? Really? Well that's brilliant, because I was worried I might've missed out when you didn't put it in the game I'd already paid 40 quid for.

Wow **Age Of Booty** really is slow, even for a point and click tactical affair. It's more of a point and wait. Ships drift around, some towns get raided, eventually, but there's a real lack of urgency to the looting and plundering. It couldn't be any less exiting if it was being phoned in. "Are they firing cannon balls? They are? Okay... Are any of them hitting the ship...? I see." Even the two-against-two setup doesn't make it any more exhilarating because there's no communication, thanks to the current headset apathy out there. Instead, everyone just charges around doing their own thing and occasionally meeting in the middle.



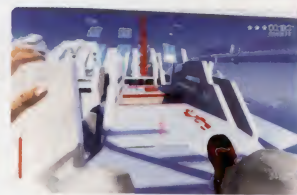
Fracture's been on my list for a while now but I haven't been able to get a game. It's almost as if no one wanted to play a super-bland space warrior fighting on planet meh. After weeks of logging on fruitlessly I eventually found a match. Against one man. But not

just any man, oh no, I found the master of Fracture online. He destroyed me 25 nil. I only saw him twice. It was like being beaten up by the invisible man. How did he get so good if no one else is playing? I did get another go, later, against normal people, which was more fun – using earth-shifting powers to go PAF! MOUNTAIN! in the face of an attacker is always a laugh. Shame the rest of the game is so unrelentingly ordinary.

Download of the month

Don't get too excited about **Mirror's Edge**'s Synaesthesia map pack. It's only just over a minute's worth of racing but it is free and as a taster for the full DLC

(loads more maps like this) it's exciting. The new, even more cold and abstract design – all clean blocks floating above a pale blue ocean – turns the whole thing into Wipeout on foot. A few races in and I desperately wanted opponents to compete against, barging and shoving elbows to make jumps. Dear DICE, please make this happen. The abstract track lacks the red-highlighted runner vision to guide you which takes a little getting used to, but in the end I got my time down to one minute three seconds. Consider that a challenge.



mail@opm



A greedy gamer, wood veneers, gaming angels, what PS4 will look like and a Hitman fan loses the run of himself.

Money maker

I would like to make some money from playing games. Why can't this be done? Or am I missing something? I'd like to see a national competition for Call Of Duty, FIFA, Race Driver Grid, and all the other competitive multiplayer games out there. People would happily pay to enter in the hope of winning more money than it costs to enter. Do these things actually go on in the UK? I've heard about similar events taking place in America. I want to shoot my way to a million in Call Of Duty!

Adam Trodden, by email

From PlayStation hopes and fears to technical queries, this is the place to come for answers

Email us at opm@futurenet.com or write to Letters, OPM, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA1 2BW. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Take it from us, playing games for cash is no way out of the fiscal apocalypse. However, you can check out ukes.com for info on competitive gaming near you. Generally though, the prizes are less likely to be big bags of cash. Think more along the lines of a few free games and the chance to have your photograph taken with a promotions girl who once came 98th in FHM's High Street Honeys and now seems to hold all the universe's sorrows in her eyes.

Hit me

Hitman: Blood Money is one of the best stealth/action games ever created. Full stop. When I acquired this game back in mid 2006, it was like a gaming angel had knocked on my door, asked if she could come in, and then silently garrotted me. I played this game for about a year without once getting bored, just seeing how many ways I could kill Vinnie Sinistra in his armchair! Every now and then, I fire up my backwards compatible PS3, and although it makes horrible crunching sounds, I wince through it to play the game. Basically what I'm getting at is that Hitman: Blood Money is amazing! And I have been waiting a very, very, very long time for information about the next instalment. If you can find it in your heart,



▲ Hitman's deadly charm at work.

please search for an ounce of info. Or I might have to saw off all my limbs and send them in the post to IO Interactive, just to make a point!

Simon Baker, by email

Text OPM
Text 'Letters' then your message to 87474 - we'll include the best txts in the mag innit!*

It's genuinely stirring to know we have such right-minded readers. You're spot on about Blood Money - it's astonishing. Each month we call Eidos to ask what's happening with Hitman, and they reply: "Wait, are you the ones who sent the dead budgie in the mail?" But there definitely is a new game on the way, and rest assured you'll see it here first.

Grand designer

Dear Chairman Kaz Hirai, I've heard rumours about the next PlayStation console coming out in 2011. Is this true? If so please could you make the next-gen machine bigger than PlayStation 3. Like two PlayStation 3s stuck together. And please could you make it easier to develop for. Show its true potential and blow us gamers away. I have written a design on a separate sheet of paper. Good luck.

Carlton Reid, London

Contrary to popular belief, we don't keep Kaz Hirai in the OPM stationary cupboard. Nonetheless, we're sure our glorious

What's on my hard drive



Laura Varley,
Portsmouth

Music

Lots of rock and metal like Within Temptation and Slipknot but guilty pleasures too, such as Maroon 5 and Will Young!

Photo

Mainly just holiday pictures from Florida and some family stuff.



Video

Game and film trailers - Motorstorm 2, Tomb Raider, Indiana Jones...

Game

A wide variety including MGS4, LittleBigPlanet, Soulcalibur IV and The Orange Box.

Friends

Mainly people I've met from the OPM forum, including, of course, the amazing Rocket Minions!

Tell us what's on your hard drive!
Email us at opm@futurenet.com

leader will be interested to see your designs for PS4. We particularly liked the annotation which specifically insisted it be 'big and bulky'. Probably best not to rely on Apple headhunting for you, dude.

★ Got wood?

What do you do if your fabulous but dull-looking PlayStation 3 doesn't go with your retro lounge? Simply add a little wood veneer fablon (other sticky-backed plastics are available and you should certainly get an adult to help you) plus an old Sony badge if you have one lying around... And it's back to the days of retro gaming. Here's one I made earlier! I tried fabloning the new HDTV too, but that looked terrible! So, as the PS3 experts, what do you think?

Steve Holman (aged nearly 49), by email

What do I think? I think my niece went at my old PS2 with a tube of glitter glue and some sequins and it still looks more tasteful. You can have a year's sub to the magazine just for calling us the PS3 experts, but let's have no more talk of fablon on this page ever again, eh?

Grey gamers

You hear it all the time: the story of depressed OAPs who, having toiled away for so many years, find themselves bored senseless during what should be their life's swan song. I believe I have a solution: they should simply find themselves a PS2 somewhere and spend their days learning the ways of the DualShock. Admittedly, they are not likely to possess the kind of hand-eye co-ordination that we youngsters do, but are the trials of adjusting to a new, exciting concept not half the fun? It's hardly a pension-stretching proposition either, with the console only costing 90 squid for a shiny new model, and I think that comes with a game included. Complicated titles such as Metal Gear Solid are naturally out of the question, but why not experiment with Jak And Daxter, Ratchet & Clank, maybe even Timesplitters at a stretch. Can you see the logic of my marvellous plan?

Ciaran McConville, by email

You've clearly never heard of Grandma Hardcore. (Pro tip:

❑ Dashing or disastrous?
The DIY wood veneer PS3.



Ask
SONY

Q Is there a printer I can use with my PlayStation 3?

A A limited number of Epson and Canon printers are compatible with the PS3 system. Please refer to the Canon and Epson websites for more information.

❑ Resistance 2 – the old-age pensioner's game of choice.



do not, repeat *not*, type that into Google with safesearch turned off.) She's a massive fan of games like Resistance 2 and Metal Gear Solid, and we're willing to bet she could pwn most players a quarter of her age with one hand. Playing PlayStation 6 is the only thing we've got to look forward to, assuming the whole marriage/kids/happiness thing doesn't come together soon.

Mod rule

I think if the PlayStation 3 wants to seriously compete against other consoles and PCs, developers need to start creating firmware that lets you download mods. I'm not talking about official DLC, I mean mods and maps that people make themselves. I would download Call Of Duty 4 from Steam for £30.00 because I could then download maps, add-ons, mods etc, but my

computer isn't good enough to play it, which is exactly why I bought a PS3 in the first place. You can already download maps and mods for Unreal Tournament 3 on PS3 so why not other games? If Sony managed to do this I think people would play the games for longer and be encouraged to buy more sequels, etc.

Tom Heelas, by email

With the likes of Far Cry 2, LittleBigPlanet and Unreal Tournament III, the revolution is already happening. It's just a bit of a slow revolution. But on the upside there

haven't been a huge amount of beheadings. User-created content is already big on PS3 and it's only going to get bigger.

Off the Wall



Choice cuts from the OPM Facebook group



Limited edition

"I want Sony to release a batch of PS3s with Brian Blessed's face on them. With an actual cutting from his beard as an optional extra."

Holly Cooper



Pun power

"I put my coins in an arcade machine and it said 'Alright our kid! You could wait for a lifetime to spend your days in the sun-shiiiiine!' It was Liam Gallagher."

Iain Wilson



Film buff

"I watched The Empire Strikes Back today, the sequel to a film called Star Wars, and it turns out that Darth Vader is Luke's dad!"

Johnboy Cole



Calibur customs

"All my characters are either weird, dressed in as little as possible or big cats."

Laura Varley



Spoil sport

"Sports games seem pointless. The only football game I've played more than once was Red Card – only because you could hit the ref."

Stephen Tailby



Reader replies

"I would say we also care about sexual innuendo, rants, same number posts, sexual innuendo, secret games and MGS Online."

Stewie Hitchcock

Send your questions to:
opm@futurenet.com

who is...

Nathan Hale

#26
PLAYSTATION
LEGENDS
PlayStation
Official Magazine - UK

Sony's leader of the resistance

Imbued with superhuman strength and regenerative powers, Sergeant Nathan Hale manages to liberate the UK from the invading Chimera mutants pretty much on his own. The hero of Resistance, Insomniac's alternate history shooter, notches this implausible victory at great cost to himself though. His supernatural skills are a legacy of both experimentation by the US Army and infection in the field by the Chimera. Still, for keeping mankind in the running, we salute you...

Cooliest moments

Grimsby Conversion Centre

Having conquered the UK, the Chimera repurpose Grimsby's fisheries as factories for turning humans into mutants. Genocide of mankind notwithstanding, they're mighty efficient for fang-faced alien maniacs.



The Leviathan

Who cares if Nathan Hale's battle against the 300ft tall Leviathan in Resistance 2 is basically a glorified cut-scene? Not since Kratos took on the Colossus Of Rhodes in God Of War II has playing 'dodge daddy's fists' been so much fun.



Invasion USA

Resistance 2 isn't exactly lacking in dollars-on-the-screen eye candy, but few moments can rival the awesome sight of the massed ships of the Chimera invasion of San Francisco dwarfing the Golden Gate Bridge.



The big smoke

In the first Resistance London is slowly being consumed by parasitic Chimera architecture. It starts with you stomping Hybrids in Trafalgar Square and climaxes with a battle against two vicious Widowmakers.



Enemies

Goliath

There's no washing this enormous mecha-spider down the plughole. It's festooned with death-dealing guns and also launches Spires - missiles that dispense thousands of human-infecting crawler parasites.



Gray Jack

The final stage of the Chimera Hybrid's development - lanky, rotting mutants who have insta-hurt toxic claws and an NBA-grade reach. Forget outrunning them - break out the Rossmore and get some.



Fury

Presumably named after the overriding emotion you feel when you realise the Fury is impossible to kill and is basically the developer's way of stopping you from trying to swim to safety. Boo.



Titan

Use the Chimera virus to mutate the human body to its absolute extreme and this is the result. The Titan violently explodes in a power shower of wet meat if you hit its coolant packs. Warning: do not return to Lil' Titans.



Best weapons



Auger Mark II

The Mark I only enabled you to shoot enemies through walls. Mark II perfects the weapon by letting you see the hidden enemies as holograms. Want one.



XR-005 Hailstorm

Fires subsonic bolts that ricochet off surfaces until they hit something soft and fleshy. Plus its secondary fire launches an automated turret that fires in 360°. Duck!



HE .44 Magnum

A secondary firing mode detonates its discharged rounds, so you can boobytrap a Chimera corpse and take out his mates as they catch up. It's practically cheating.



Air Fuel Grenade

It's all about anticipation. The hiss as it dispenses a fine cloud of weaponised premium unleaded, the split second of calm, then the ragged alien screams as the cloud ignites.

Resistance trivia



When clergy at Manchester Cathedral found out that Resistance featured its interior, they were rather upset. But visitor numbers increased as a result.



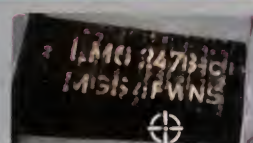
Listen carefully in Resistance 1 for the voice of Nolan North, better known as Nathan Drake, the Prince Of Persia, and Desmond from Assassin's Creed.



Hale's ability to delay the Chimera virus mutation is down to his part in Project Abraham, a US experiment to harness the benefits of its infection.



Nathan Hale was a real-life hero of the American Revolutionary War. He was hanged, but said, "I only regret that I have but one life to give my country."



The guys at Insomniac were so taken with MGS4 that they included a tribute in the form of a message on an ammo crate. It reads 'MGS4PWNS'.



PlayStation Portable

